

LECTURE ON THE VISIONS OF EZEKIEL.

p. 1, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

I. INTRODUCTION.

p. 1, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

EZEK. xii. 27.

p. 1, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. p. 1, Para. 4, [VISIONS].

EVER since man fell from the state of innocence and obedience in which he was created and placed in the garden of Eden, he has been prone to hide from God, and to cover iniquity in his bosom, rather than to confess his crimes and forsake his transgressions, as the law of gratitude would dictate, and the gospel of Jesus Christ require. When man sinned, all the malignant passions of the evil spirit entered the citadel of his heart, and reigned predominant over his soul. *Hatred*, which like a goad urges him on to his own destruction, is ever rankling in his breast, and, mad with rage, he plunges forward like an angry horse in the day of battle, to trample under foot the Being he abhors, the law he dislikes, and even the offers of mercy and peace which he detests. *Malice* deliberately influencing his mind, like a deep flowing river, presses him onward to plot all kind of mischief against him whom he ought in his soul to admire and respect, and likewise against those who may love, or be loved, by the object of his malicious spite. p. 1, Para. 5, [VISIONS].

See Eph. ii.2. 2 Tim. ii. 26. [+] Rom. iii. 10-18. i.21-32.] p. 1, Para. 6, [VISIONS].

This can only account for the ferocious persecution which has followed the people of God in all ages, and among all nations, from the days of Cain and Abel to the present time. p. 1, Para. 7, [VISIONS].

If man had been only possessed of hatred without malice, he would not have persecuted, he would only have shunned the society of him he detested; but malice pursues the object with an untiring zeal, which will never yield, even

in death itself. For in hell they lift up their eyes, (with a malicious spite against the throne, and him who sitteth upon it,) being in torment. Show me a *man*, or *WOMAN* if you please, who has malice against a neighbor, and I will show you one whose tongue will never tire, whose feet will never be weary. Neither the torrents nor the blasts, the rains nor the snows, darkness nor light, will ever prevent them from spreading their malicious lies, to injure their neighbor's character. They will visit the couch of the sick, or the bed of the dying, to whisper the often-told, malignant tale. They will put on the visage of sanctity itself, and visit the sanctuary of God, where holy men and women meet to praise and pray, in order to drop their poison into the ear of some unwary listener. They will creep into houses to lead captive silly women, as says the apostle. They will separate very friends -- they will destroy the peace of families, the prosperity of Zion. Such are the servants of Satan. p. 2, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

Envy is another base and sordid passion of fallen man. How mean, how selfish, how despicable is that soul that looks with envy on those above it, that cannot be at ease when others are blessed, that rests only in the woes of others. Vexation and disappointment are the lot of its inheritance. "Envy," says Solomon, "is the rottenness of the bones." The envious man is his own tormentor. Job says "envy slayeth the silly one." p. 2, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

But *unbelief*, that worst of all sins, that final, soul-destroying sin, which makes man an infidel, and sinks him down to dwell in endless woe, where hope and joy, and every grace that gives to life a blessing, are gone, forever gone -- which distrusts the word of God given for the soul's salvation; discards the promises, although supported by the oath of God; and hinders the work of God, though Christ himself be engaged in it; -- what shall we say of this climax of all sins? p. 2, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

Christ himself could not do many mighty works in his own country, and among his own kin, because of their unbelief. Unbelief caused the destruction of the Israelites in the wilderness; they did not rely on the word of God, his promises they rejected, his precepts despised, his providence disregarded, and murmured against his government; therefore they were consumed in the wilderness. Unbelief will eventually prove the condemnation of the wicked. For the unbelieving, says John, shall have their

part in the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death. This then, of all the evils of the human heart, brings most destructive consequences. For all that Christ has done for the salvation of sinful man cannot save an unbeliever, and all that God has done, by sending his Son, and revealing his will, his word, his grace, and proving the truth thereof by a cloud of incontestable witnesses, showing man his fallen state, his need of salvation, the certainty of condemnation, placing before him the highest motives to happiness and glory, presenting the most deplorable condition of the finally impenitent, exciting the rational mind to virtue and holiness by the promise of great and lasting rewards, threatening the incorrigible with just and heavy judgments here, and in the world to come eternal banishment from all good; -- all this will not effect his salvation; the unbeliever is an unbeliever still. Nothing, no motives, no threatenings, no rewards can move him. He remains unchanged. Yet there is one way and one only by which the unbelieving heart can be changed. And blessed be the name of God, he alone was able to discover the way and execute the plan. Infinite knowledge could devise, and creative power could do the work. You must be born again -- created in Christ Jesus unto good works. All other ways were tried with the people to whom our text is addressed, "*the house of Israel.*" p. 2, Para. 4, [VISIONS].

Their fathers had been called and separated from all the families of the earth, they had been preserved by miracles, and delivered from their powerful foes by the more powerful arm of the Almighty. They had been fed and clothed by the liberal hand of him who called them sons. He condescended to converse with some of them as a man converses with his friend, face to face. He wrote the constitution of their laws with his own finger on tables of stone. He gave his precepts to Moses, and sanctioned them on mount Sinai by his voice. He divided to Israel by lot, and appointed their portion in a land flowing with milk and honey. He drove his enemies before them, and gave them peace in all their borders. He established his ordinances among them, and his holiness filled their temple at Jerusalem. He promised them a Messiah in the seed of Abraham to sit upon the throne of David. Yet after all they were rebellious still, as the prophet says in the context. p. 3, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

With these preliminary remarks, I now come, p. 4, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

I. TO ILLUSTRATE THE VISION; *the vision which they treated with so much neglect, and said it was yet "for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off."*
p. 4, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

The visions which Ezekiel had seen you will find in the first chapter of Ezekiel, and then again the eighth to the tenth inclusive. In these visions, which agree, are represented the glory of God in the revelation of the gospel, which would be revealed in Christ between the two cherubims, the Old and New Testaments; the setting up of the spiritual kingdom, and destruction of the Jewish hierarchy; the different situations or times in the gospel day, through which this kingdom would pass; and the completion of the same, and destruction of the world and all the abominations of the earth. It is very evident to those who will read these visions of Ezekiel, that the principal design of God was to warn the Jews of the heavy judgments which he was about to bring upon their city and nation, for their gross sins, their dreadful abominations, and idolatrous departure from the living God, and through them also to warn us of our approaching danger, under similar circumstances. For what happened to them "happened unto them for ensamples, (or types,) and they are written for our admonition, on whom the end of the world is come," as saith the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 11. p. 4, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

The first and second chapters of Ezekiel give us the vision which he first saw. The four living creatures, having the faces of a lion, man, ox and eagle, are the same as John saw, Revelations fourth and fifth chapters, and, as we are there taught, are those who are redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, including the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The *lion* represents the church in the apostles' age, when they went forth bold as lions, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world. The *ox* represents the church in a state of subjection and persecution, under the Roman emperors Nero, Domitian, and others, when they were delivered unto the slaughter and were made slaves by the Roman power. The face of a *man* denotes that state under which the church lived in the days of Constantine and his successors, when the kingdoms of the world, represented in prophecy by beasts, were more or less under the control of the church and her ambitious clergy, as beasts are under the rule of

man; and when the church united with the state, and became haughty, imperious, and proud, like a man. The face of an eagle represents the church in the state when antichrist began to persecute and devour the true children of God, and her divine Master gave her two wings of an eagle, that she might fly unto the place in the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, to be nourished 1260 days, or time, times and a half: thus giving us the four principal features of the church as she has appeared to the world since her establishment on the earth. The wheels denote the government of God. The outer or outside wheel is his general government with the world, and the kingdoms thereof, in which the church now moves. p. 4, Para. 4, [VISIONS].

The inner wheel is the government of God over his church while in this state, under the control or power of the kingdoms of the world, and shows us that God has a people, a remnant, in the world, children of the kingdom, invisible perhaps to us, but known unto God from the creation, as all his works were; "For we have this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." Yet they grow with the tares, and will grow with them, as our Savior said, until the harvest, or end of the world: when they, that is, his people, will be gathered from among all people, where they have been scattered during the dark and cloudy day of persecution, tribulation, and distress. p. 5, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

But God, rich in mercy towards those who believe, has by the prophets and apostles opened the door of his future dealings, so that we can look into the times yet to come, and discover some of that glory which his children will inherit at the revelation of Jesus Christ, to comfort and console those who believe, under their trials and afflictions, and to animate and excite those who are dilatory and negligent in his cause to more faithfulness and perseverance in the way. p. 6, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

Not only has our heavenly Father opened the doors of futurity to his children, but to those also who are yet in a state of nature, that they might believe. He has, by his word, by the mouth of his prophets, and by Jesus Christ and the apostles, taught them the awful destruction that awaits the finally impenitent. David says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell," Psalm ix. 17, and prays, "Let them go down quick into hell." lv. 15. Isaiah, speaking of the wicked worshipers of Babylon, says, "Yet thou shalt be

brought down to hell." Isaiah xiv. 15. Christ says, "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. x. 28. Again, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Matt. xxiii. 33. p. 6, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

In 2 Peter iii. 7: "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." p. 6, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

And "these shall go away into everlasting punishment." Matt. xxv. 46. "And they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." John v. 29. Surely God could not have talked more plainly; and, indeed, what language could have been used, so that wicked men would not have perverted and wrested it? They themselves cannot give us any language which would have expressed the idea to their satisfaction. Peter says, "Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction. Ye, therefore, brethren, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 Peter iii. 16,17. p. 6, Para. 4, [VISIONS].

I have endeavored to show you some of the things which God has revealed to his servants the prophets in visions; and it now remains for me to show some of those excuses which the Jews made, to evade the force and truth of Ezekiel's prophecy. p. 7, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

II. I SHALL SHOW THAT PEOPLE AT THE PRESENT DAY ARE MAKING THE SAME EXCUSES AND PLEAS AS THEN.

p. 7, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

1. The Jews said "the vision was for many days to come." You will readily see why they put off the vision for many days. It was that they might have more time to accomplish their own wicked purposes, to execute their own avaricious plans. They were engaged, in Ezekiel's days, in idolatry to an alarming degree. The people were embracing some of the most dangerous errors that ever crept into the Jewish church. It had become very fashionable to be prophets, or teachers. Whether this was because such persons received great salaries, or because their trade was called honorable, or because it was an easy life, and they were too indolent to get a living by labor, we may not be able

exactly to tell. But some things we can tell: Ezekiel has recorded them. They are compared to foxes. Ezek. xiii. 4: "O Israel, thy prophets are like foxes in the deserts." They were cunning, sly, and deceitful. p. 7, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

They were too indolent to study the word of God, and bring out things new and old; therefore they prophesied out of their own hearts, or stole, perhaps, the writings of others, as the Lord accuses them in the 2d and 3d verses. In the 5th verse, "Ye have not gone up into the gap, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel." When trials came into the church and breaches were made in her walls, they fled and left the people of God in affliction, and did not, by their instruction, prepare them "to stand in the battle, in the day of the Lord." They preached or prophesied that which was not in the word of God. See chapter xiii. 6 to 8. They prophesied that which suited the carnal ear, always ready to cry peace, even where the Lord had not spoken peace. See verse 10. Read Ezekiel xiii. 19 to the end. They conspired together, like a roaring lion ravaging for the prey. They devoured souls, and hunted for treasures and precious things; they caused many to mourn among the people of God. They violated the law of God, and polluted holy things, by making no difference between the clean and unclean. They shed blood and destroyed souls to get dishonest gain. They daubed with untempered mortar, and formed creeds and ceremonies which God had not commanded. They fed themselves on the fat of the land, and clothed themselves with the finest wool; but the flock they did not feed. The diseased they did not strengthen, neither healed that which was sick. They bound not up the broken in heart, nor brought back the wandering. They sought not for those which were lost; but with force and cruelty they ruled over them. See Eze. xxii. 25 to 29, and xxxiv. 1 to 6, inclusive. p. 7, Para. 4, [VISIONS].

The prophet Isaiah, in describing the same characters, says, "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand. They all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter." Isa. lvi. 10 and 11. p. 8, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

If any man, pretending to be a preacher of the gospel, at

this day, should preach to us in as plain and forcible a manner as Ezekiel did to the prophets of his time, should we be apt to apply the word so preached to ourselves? No. Perhaps we should say, -- he is prophesying of many days yet to come, or of times that are afar off. p. 8, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

2. The people in that day were guilty, as God by Ezekiel charges them, of setting up idols in their hearts, and putting the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. See Ezekiel xiv. 3. p. 9, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

The idols which they set up in their hearts were these very prophets which Ezekiel had before described; for, instead of searching the word of God for their faith and practice, they set up their false prophets as their lawgivers, and their construction of the word as their best rule. These were their stumbling-blocks which the children of Israel stumbled over into iniquity, and instead of going to God to inquire of him concerning their principles and duty, they go to these false prophets to inquire; and God says he will suffer them to be deluded, and prophet and people will be caught in a net together of their own making. p. 9, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

3. They had rebelled against the Lord, and were stiff-hearted; they kept not his statutes, and despised his judgments; they regarded not his commands, and kept not the holy Sabbath. They changed the ordinances of his house, and committed whoredom by their communion with idols. They defiled the sanctuary of God, by admitting the profane and unclean within the sacred place. They set up altars in every high place, and did not humble themselves before God. They were proud and haughty of spirit, and regarded not the wants of the poor and needy. They had much respect for those of high birth, while the low and base-born were treated with total neglect. For the proverb, "Because the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the children's teeth are set on edge," had been much used in Israel at that day. p. 9, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

4. They had got to themselves itching ears, being more pleased with the musical voice of their teachers than with the truth. They looked more for an *orator* than they did for a true prophet. Eze. xxxiii. 30-32. Yes. The Lord says to Ezekiel, "The children of thy people still are talking against thee, by the walls and in the doors of their

houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth of the Lord; and they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." These are some of the abominations of the children of Israel, and for these things Ezekiel was sent to them, and was commanded to denounce sore and heavy judgments upon them, to wit, pestilence, famine, war, and captivity. And what was the effect? Why, all the effect it had was to make them say, "*The vision he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.*" They dare not deny the vision itself, for this would have been too barefaced, or perhaps Ezekiel had given them too much evidence of his being a true prophet. Yet they could avoid the conclusion, the evil consequences, as they vainly thought, or could excuse themselves from repenting then, for he prophesied of times that are afar off, say they; and perhaps some of them might have fixed on 2428 years afterward for these judgments to be poured out upon the world, which would bring it down to the very day in which we live. I shall now show, p. 9, Para. 4, [VISIONS].

III. THAT THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL APPLIES TO US
IN THIS DAY AS WELL AS TO THE JEWS.
p. 10, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

Men in all ages of the world are, and have been, the same. The natural man among the Jews was governed by the same selfish, worldly, unholy principles, as the natural man among the Gentiles. p. 10, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

And the spiritual man among them was led by the same Spirit, governed by the same principle of love to God and love for his fellows, as you, my brethren, if you are what you profess to be. Therefore, there can be no reason shown why God will not deal with us as with them, under similar circumstances. For the scripture is of no private interpretation, but is given as a rule for all. p. 10, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

The same promises that were given to believing Abraham, are also given to a believer now; only we live nearer the

consummation of the promise than our father Abraham did. It is the same river of life, on the banks of which we live, that issued, ankle deep, from the garden of Eden, in the days of our first parents; only we can swim in it. It is the same gospel that was given to Adam in the promise of the "seed of the woman," as we enjoy in the revelation of Jesus Christ our Savior; only we live in a more brilliant display of that gospel. And the same law which Adam our head broke, we his children have broken, though under more aggravating circumstances. The same curse denounced against Adam for sin, has been poured upon us to this day; only in a greater degree, because we sin against greater light. Then, can there be a reasonable argument produced, why the woes denounced against Israel may not, eventually, be poured upon us, for like offences? No. God is the same, his justice is the same, his mercy, his long-suffering is the same; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. p. 11, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

And one thing more -- men make the same excuses, the same pleas, now as in the days of Ezekiel. Tell them of the judgments of God being poured out upon those that are hirelings in the church, those who feed themselves and not the flock; those who come in with sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves; those who preach smooth things, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace; those who change the ordinances of God's house and teach the doctrine of men; those who build up creeds and plaster them over with man's wisdom and reasoning, -- and when you refer them to Ezekiel for proof, what will be their answer? The vision which he saw was fulfilled many days past, and the time that he prophesied of is far back. p. 11, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

The only difference between our excuse and that of the Jews, is -- they cast the blame and judgments forward many days, upon us; and we throw it many days back, upon them. And thus we put off the evil day a great while yet to come, or place it on our fathers' shoulders a great way back. There is a sect calling themselves believers in the word of God, that originated in the garden of Eden, and have been laboring to convince men that there will be no judgment day. They tell you it was past a long while ago, and therefore they cry peace; but let one of their fellow-creatures owe them a trifling sum, say one hundred pence, if you please, and if he is unable or unwilling to pay, they are as fond of a day of judgment as other men. They

claim that which they deny to God, the right to judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed, even Jesus Christ. p. 11, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

Again; if we show that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world, and refer to the prophets as proof; if by the most simple and plain testimony we point out the time when that day will take place, what will be the common reply? I ask not for the answer of infidels, but of those who pretend to believe in the word of God. They will tell you "that the vision which the prophet saw is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off." p. 12, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

Again. Tell men that they ought to repent and believe in God to the saving of their souls, and they will retort that there is time enough yet, there are many days to come; and so they will put far off the day of repentance. Tell them death may cut them off in an unexpected moment, and then it will be too late to make preparation; and, like the Jews, they will answer you that death "is for many days to come," and "the time is far off." p. 12, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

But propose to men any worldly advantage, any gratification of their carnal desires, and they are all anxiety to obtain it; nothing will prevent their pursuing the object with indefatigable industry. Rain or snow, cold or wet, naked or clothed, they press towards their object; they will go without sleep or refreshment to obtain this or that gratification. p. 12, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

But present to them eternal riches laid up in heaven for the willing and obedient, and call on them to perform any of the duties God requires of them, and they are ready with a host of excuses. Ask them to go to the sanctuary. *It looks like rain.* Ask them to go to the prayer meeting. *They have no time.* Ask them to come to the conference room. *It is too dark.* Invite them to an assembly of saints. *They have no clothes fit to wear.* Tell them of a crucified Savior, *they are so dull.* Speak of the great supper which he has provided for them, *and they have no appetite.* Ask them if they know he is coming soon to receive them to himself. *We have paid no attention to that subject.* Ask them if they expect to enter into his rest? *We hope to.* What is the ground of your hope, my dear friend? If you love him not now, how can you expect to love him hereafter? If you can sacrifice nothing in this life, how can you

expect to receive the benefits of that sacrifice which cost the Son of God a life of poverty, deprivation, and distress? which cost him groans and tears and blood in the garden? which cost him mockings, tauntings, and scourging in Pilate's judgment hall? which cost him sweat, and blood, and death on the cross? Think, my brethren, Oh! think of the passion of Christ; and if that will not move you to a more active and diligent life in his cause, then you may safely conclude you have no lot nor part in that glorious hope which he hath laid up for all those who love his appearing. p. 13, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

IMPROVEMENT. p. 13, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

1. We are taught by our subject that man is naturally prone to put far off the evil day, especially *death* and the *judgment* day. p. 14, Para. 1, [VISIONS].

2. We learn that those who make excuses, to exonerate themselves from their duties to God, ought to inquire if the same excuses prevent them from the active duties of the world. p. 14, Para. 2, [VISIONS].

3. We may conclude, that as the righteous judgments of God, threatened upon the Jews, were literally accomplished; so will they, and in an unexpected hour, overtake us. p. 14, Para. 3, [VISIONS].

4. We learn, my brother professors, that if our love is not as strong for Christ as for the world, we are wolves in sheep's clothing, and ought to be alarmed for our future state. p. 14, Para. 4, [VISIONS].