

THE GLORY OF ZION HER SURE DEFENCE

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham on Tuesday Evening, September 30th, 1845

"And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain" Isa.4:5, 6

This chapter is closely connected with the preceding one. Indeed, the second, third, and fourth chapters of this prophecy may be said to form one series. The last verse of the third chapter reads thus: "And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground." In these words the blessed Spirit describes the desolation that was to fall upon Jerusalem. Continuing the same subject, the first verse of the fourth chapter proceeds to relate the consequences of that desolation, "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." This striking prediction dwells upon a remarkable result and feature of the general desolation that should take place. The men should be so fearfully slaughtered in war that seven women should take hold of one man who had escaped the general carnage, and seize him for a husband, that they might remove from themselves that reproach so dreaded by Jewish women of having neither spouse nor offspring. They would be willing to eat their own bread and wear their own apparel if they were merely allowed to take his name to avoid this reproach. There the chapter should have ended, for though the words which follow are connected with the desolation predicted, yet

they open a new feature of the subject by declaring promises of mercy to the remnant which escapes the threatened judgments.

"In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." A remnant is here spoken of as having escaped in this day of desolation. To this escaped remnant it is promised that "the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely." By "the branch of the LORD," I understand the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ; and by "the fruit of the earth," his human nature, his divine nature is beautiful and glorious to this remnant according to the election of grace, which has escaped the general overthrow. "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:" that is, whose name is in the book of life, and who has the life of God in his soul; "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion," (by washing them in the fountain once opened for sin and uncleanness), "and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning." Then he adds the gracious promise contained in the text, "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain."

The desolation has taken place literally, and I see no reason why we may not expect a restoration to take place literally also. But that interpretation I shall not now insist upon.

There is another interpretation, one of a spiritual and experimental nature, applicable to the regenerated family of God, which I shall chiefly dwell upon; and as, viewed in this light, we may take the promise in the text to refer spiritually to the household of faith, so we may take also the desolation as equally spiritually verified in their experience. In other words, that there must be a desolation in them as well as, and prior to, a manifestation. When the Lord creates upon mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, it is, or following upon that day when "she being desolate shall sit upon the ground."

In looking at these words we may consider,

I. The promise itself.

II. The result and effect which flow from the fulfilment of the promise.

I. *The promise itself.* "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." You will observe the Lord here speaks of mount Zion. Mount Zion typifies the gospel and the blessings connected with it; as we find the apostle speaking in Heb.12:22, where, contrasting the law with the gospel, he says, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." When a believer is brought from mount Sinai with all its curses to mount Zion with all its blessings, then indeed he comes to Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, "and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." When he is come to mount Zion, there he wishes ever to abide; and not only so, but there he wishes to assemble with the saints who meet together in the name and

fear of the Lord.

The Lord, therefore, has given a promise that he will "create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." This has no doubt a reference to the pillar of the cloud, of which we read for the first time in Exodus 13:21,22. "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." This was the manifestation of the presence of the Lord. It was a cloud to show that the Lord was invisible; as he said to Moses, "There shall no man see me, and live" (Ex.33:20). It was in the form of a pillar, to show the certainty and security of God's favour to his people. It was on high, to show that it was from heaven, and was the guide for the people of God, pointing to heaven as their eternal resting-place. It was the open manifestation to the Children of Israel of the presence of God in their midst, the glorious effulgence of the Three-One God. To it, therefore, the eyes of Israel looked night and day. At its command they moved forward, and at its command they remained in their place.

We find also when the tabernacle was set up, that the cloud covered the tent of the congregation: "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Ex.40:34,35). When Solomon afterwards built the temple, the same cloud came also, and filled it with the glorious presence of the Lord. "And it came to pass when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD,

so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD" (I Kings 8:10,11).

This pillar, then, of the cloud spoken of in the text, the "cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night;" sets forth the manifest presence of God, his appearance unto, his dwelling among, the children of men. Now the Lord in old time, under the first covenant, restricted the pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to one spot. It rested on the tabernacle, and on that only. But in gospel times, according to the promise in the text, this pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, is not restricted to one spot, but is upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies. Now this is fulfilled when the presence of the Lord is felt in the soul; when his favour surrounds his people as with a cloud; when the manifestation of his mercy and grace is enjoyed; when his glory shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ; when his love is shed abroad in the heart. Then the Lord creates upon such a dwelling place of mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day.

There is, doubtless, some further spiritual meaning in its being the same pillar which by day appears as a cloud and smoke, and by night as the shining of a flaming fire. Now this may point typically to the different states and conditions of God's living family. When they are travelling by night, they want something clear and conspicuous to direct their steps. Were it merely a cloud and smoke, it would not be seen; but when it takes the form of a flaming fire, it becomes a beacon light to guide their feet. The Lord's people are often in these paths of darkness, and then they want something to direct their path; they cannot listen to every voice, they want the Lord to speak to them; they want a special manifestation of his favour, and the shedding abroad of his dying love. Where

these things are not given, all with them is darkness, their evidences, their testimonies, and their expectations (when this darkness besets the soul) are all beclouded. They cannot see their way, and often can scarcely believe they are children of God at all. What they want to see is the shining of a flaming fire, to have some clear testimonies, some bright manifestations, that they are the Lord's people.

Now these are given in Christ. Did not the Shechinah and the pillar of the cloud and smoke rest upon the tabernacle? What was the tabernacle but a type of the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ? This was "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Heb.8:2) Christ's body was the temple which was destroyed, and raised up again in three days: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jno.2:19). God has sent his only begotten Son; for in him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that the glory of God should shine forth in his face. The Shechinah and the cloud of divine glory rest upon him. In darkness, then, and distress of soul, when all is gloom and midnight, if we get a view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, if we see there is a Mediator betwixt our guilty souls and God, there is strength to look to him, and a putting forth of that secret power in the heart whereby we are drawn with the cords of love and the bands of a man. Then there is the shining of a flaming fire by night. There is then an object for faith to fix its eyes on, Christ; and his grace and glory concentrate the affections of the soul. When we can see, by the eye of faith, the glory of God shining in the face of the divine Mediator, however dark our path may be in providence or in grace, then the shining of the flaming fire by night rests upon our dwelling place. The dwelling place is, no doubt, the believer's heart; for every believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and Christ dwells in his heart by faith. Therefore, the Lord creates upon every

dwelling place of mount Zion, in every one who is a temple of the Holy Ghost, in every one in whom he works to will and to do of his own good pleasure, this cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, in favouring at times the ransomed soul with his gracious presence.

The promise is made also to "her assemblies." When the saints meet together in the name of the Lord, when they come up to the house of prayer, when they assemble themselves that they may hear the Word read and preached, and unite in lifting up their hearts to God, his presence is promised. The Lord will create, there is no power in man to create it; it is a divine creation flowing out of divine operation, the Lord will create by his mighty power, by a miracle of grace, through his matchless mercy, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night upon the assemblies of mount Zion. And do not the Lord's people sometimes find it so? Do not they experience the manifestation of the cloud and smoke by day, in a sense of the presence of the Lord? Do they not find, too, the shining of a flaming fire by night in the presence of the Lord more or less bedewing their souls, and resting upon their hearts? Now, wherever the Lord has blessed a soul under the Word, wherever anyone has felt the presence of God in meeting together with his people, wherever in Zion's assemblies the Lord has touched the heart with his Spirit, and given a sense of his goodness and love, he has been fulfilling this promise, that he would "create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night."

II. But we pass on to consider *what is the fruit, result, and effect of the fulfilment of this promise.* The first is this, "Upon all the glory shall be a *defence.*"

The glory here signifies the same thing as the cloud and

smoke by day. Thus we read, "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (2 Chron.5:14). The cloud was the way in which God in early days manifested his glory; it was a visible representation of his glorious presence. Now, "upon all the glory" (margin, *above* all the glory) "shall be a defence. And," it is added, "there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." We gather from this that though the Lord brings his people to mount Zion, though he favours them alone and in the company of his people with his presence, yet they are not secure from enemies. They want "a defence;" and this the Lord has promised to give. If he has brought us to mount Zion, it has not delivered us, in our feelings and in our experience, from our enemies. We shall probably have more temptations after we have come to mount Zion than before we were brought there; we shall have a deeper discovery of our fallen nature; we shall have more gins and traps laid for our feet by the enemy of souls; we shall have heavier, sharper, more cutting trials; we shall have more powerful external enemies, and be compassed with greater difficulties than before.

If, then, the Lord has brought us to mount Zion, so far from being delivered from all our enemies, he will make us feel more and more that we need him for "a defence" and refuge, as well as to be the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever. A defence he provides. He has not brought his people to Zion to leave them exposed to the attacks of their enemies; for the Lord is not only "a Sun," to give them light, but he is "a Shield," to defend and protect them on every side. He is a defence from the law, which curses and condemns; a defence from the fiery darts of the wicked one; a defence from the persecuting world, and from professors

having the form of godliness, but denying the power. They cannot, they do not defend themselves; for they are weak and helpless, and exposed to every dart of the enemy. But when they are brought to mount Zion, and see and feel the cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, resting upon their souls, upon all this glory there is a defence, something to ward off the fiery darts, something to protect them that they may find security and shelter.

But there is another fruit: "And there shall be a *tabernacle* for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." Can this Tabernacle be anything less than the Lord of life and glory who tabernacled here below in our nature? When he brings his people to mount Zion, there is not merely a discovery of his presence; there is a sight also, by living faith, of his Person as the Son of God. There is a sight of his glory, "(the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." He then becomes a Protection, a Covert, a Shelter to all that put their trust under the shadow of his wings.

This Tabernacle seems for two purposes.

1. It is a *shadow in the daytime from the heat*; and, 2. A *place of refuge and covert from storm and from rain*.

1. The heat in those countries is dreaded as much as, if not more than the storm and rain, and protection from it is as carefully sought. Numerous references are made in the Scriptures to the heat of the climate. Take any one, "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes" (Gen.31:40). The Lord of life and glory is therefore spoken of here as being a Tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat of the sun. Sun in Scripture not only means the Sun of

Righteousness, but also the burning sun of temptation. "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me" (Song of Sol.1:6). The bride speaks here, in a figure, of the sun of temptation, which had made her black. So when we read here of "the heat," it alludes no doubt to the sun of temptation, which beats with its burning beams upon the soul. From this we want a shelter. When temptation beats upon a man, must it not dry him up (just as the sun burns up the ground), unless he get a shelter from it? Temptation will make him like the parched heath in the wilderness, and drain away all his strength, unless he obtain some shadow and protection. This shelter is the Lord of life and glory. Does not the lust of the flesh continually work? From painful experience I am sure it does. But whence are we to obtain a shadow from these temptations? Left to them, we must utterly fall. But the Lord often nips them in the bud, and stops them in their first birth, just as I might put my foot upon a lighted match before it burnt any farther. One infidel thought might otherwise make us avowed infidels. One blasphemous imagination would make us break out into the unpardonable sin. One worldly desire would make us do things that the world itself would be ashamed of. In fact, just as if a spark falling out upon gunpowder would immediately explode a whole magazine, or a lucifer match would set on fire a whole stack of corn, the year's produce of many acres, so one vile temptation in our carnal mind might produce a total conflagration of body and soul. Those who know what temptation is, know their thorough helplessness, apart from grace, to stand against it in any measure; and unless this temptation be subdued and restrained, it must altogether carry their souls captive, and drown them in destruction and perdition.

How, then, is a child of God to escape from them and their filth, guilt, and power in his conscience? He has but one way:

" a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat." That is, to hide himself in Christ; to seek refuge beneath the shadow of his wings; to wash in the fountain once opened for sin and uncleanness; to take shelter under the glorious righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe. A child of God, when he feels temptations working in his heart, is taught by the Spirit to flee to the Lord, as a child flees to his mother's bosom when affrighted. He flees to the mercy of God to cover and pardon them, and to the power of the Lord to subdue and restrain them. Thus the Lord of life and glory is a "tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat."

2. But besides the heat, there are "storm and rain." This storm and rain will one day come upon a guilty world. It was set forth in a strong figure by the deluge which overflowed the first world, and by the torrents of fire and brimstone which came down on guilty Sodom. It will burst out one day in such a way that the deluge and the destruction of Sodom will be but feeble figures of it.

Now where shall a convinced soul find a covert from this storm and rain? Have we not deserved God's wrath without measure? Do we differ from thousands and millions in hell? Are we a whit better than those who are now weltering in the burning wrath of God? Are we one whit better than those who are banished for ever from his presence? In thought, word, and action we are as bad as many there, nay, worse. There are many in hell who have not done things that we have done, said what we have said, and thought what we have thought. How, then, are we to escape the damnation of hell? There is only one place of refuge, but one covert, and that is the Lord of life and glory. His Person, his blood, his righteousness, his grace, and his love. For God has set him forth "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

(Rom.3:25) God has appointed him to be a place of refuge, a protection, and a security from storm and rain.

But besides the *future* storm and *future* rain which will one day burst upon the world, there is also from time to time a present storm in the soul. What are the flashes of a guilty conscience? What is the feeling of conviction under sin? What is any manifestation of the wrath of God against the wanderings of our backsliding hearts? Are not they like drops of the thunder storm? Are not these the manifestations of that anger which will one day burst forth? Now the Lord gives us to feel the storm and the rain; he allows these drops of the coming thunder storm to drop upon the heads of his people. He works by our doubts, fears, exercises, and perplexities. He gives us to feel his wrath against sin, that he may beat down self-righteousness, that he may completely strip away everything in the creature, and bring us wholly and solely to trust in himself. We find this set forth in Isaiah 28:17, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." The prophet is here speaking of God's people. The hail sweeping away the refuge of lies is the manifestation of God's wrath against sin, which beats them out of their false refuges. They cannot stand against the hail of divine wrath in their consciences, for they are left exposed and without shelter, until they are driven to find refuge in Christ. Thus it is a mercy to have felt the wrath of God, convictions of sin, doubts, fears, terrors, and alarms, that we by these things may flee from the wrath to come, and find in the Lord of life and glory a place of refuge and a covert from the storm and rain.

You see how these promises are made to those that are come to mount Zion, who have really embraced the gospel,

who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them, who know Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection, who have a work of grace on the conscience, who know the truth by the manifestation of it through the power of the Spirit, and by these teachings are brought to mount Zion. And when they come here, they never wish to leave it again, they never wish to set foot again on the barren, desolate mountain of Sinai. Therefore the Lord gives them a dwelling place, he sets them down in the gospel, he gives them a heart to receive it in love, he communicates a power to the soul whereby it looks to Christ and obtains a dwelling place on mount Zion. He gives it this "cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." He favours it at times with his sensible presence, and even in darkness there is the shining of a flaming fire, the eyes of the soul being directed to the Lord, even from the ends of the earth. They find too a defence in all this glory; and not only so, but in him a sure shelter. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (Prov.18:10) They find the Lord of life and glory to be a shadow from the heat, so that when temptation comes they are enabled at times to flee to him. When storm and rain beat upon their heads, they flee unto him for a place of refuge and a covert. All these things the Lord fulfils in the case of every *The Glory of Zion Her Sure Defence* ransomed and regenerated soul. Now who here can say that indeed he has been brought to mount Zion, and has felt the sweetness and power of the gospel? Who here can say, "Here will I dwell, for I desire it. This is my dwelling place, where I wish to live and die?" Who here has found the presence of the Lord and the dew of his favour resting on his spirit? Who has seen the glory of God to be a defence, so that when temptations, trials, afflictions, and sorrows came upon him, he has not looked to Assyria, not gone down to Egypt for help, but has leaned wholly and solely upon the Lord, in

whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell? Who here has known something of the storm of hail and rain beating him out of lying refuges to flee unto Jesus with sighs, cries, desires, pantings, and groanings that he would be a place of refuge and a covert for his soul? God does not give blessings singly. He hath blessed his people with "all spiritual blessings in Christ." (Eph.1:3) If he has brought a soul to seek his face, to turn to mount Zion, and to look unto Jesus from the ends of the earth, he will fulfil every longing desire of that soul, and make it a manifest and happy partaker of his grace here and his glory hereafter.