

To the prophet, this devotional exercise was succeeded by such a display of the goodness of God, as afforded him a cheering prospect of the approaching prosperity of the Church. Captivity and dispersion had not separated Israel from the loving kindness of the Lord; they were still the objects of His affectionate regard, and Jerusalem was graven upon the palms of his hands. In the painful discipline of the Church, His designs were mercy; and the prophet is consoled with a disclosure of the glorious result. The period approached, which would conclude the adversities of the Church in Babylon. The Lord would then manifest his remembrance of the rubbish and the stones of Zion, encompass his people with songs of deliverance, and add splendour and dignity to the cause of religion. The sighs of the prisoner had ascended before Him; and the nations would know, that Israel had not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God. At the time appointed the ransomed of the Lord would return to Zion, and Jerusalem be builded upon her own heap; and this work, opposed and impeded, would surmount every obstacle, and arise the ornament and the defence of the Church: *The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*

Of the completion of these words, we are largely informed in the books of Scripture. These contain the history of the restoration of the Jews, and of the re-building of Zion; and, at the same time, record those discouraging events which impeded its progress. Now, Jerusalem, you know, was an emblem of the Church. It was the centre of ordinances, of worship, and of communion with God. The family of Jacob, assembled there at the holy solemnities, represented the whole household of faith: and that ancient city prefigured the Jerusalem which is from above, and is the mother of us all. With respect to both, therefore, we may expect a general similarity in the nature of the divine dispensations. In scripture, accordingly, the history of former events is proposed for the instruction and improvement of succeeding ages; judgments, for warning; and mercies, for the hope and consolation of the Church. Viewing these words, then, as written for our admonition, I have laid them before you; not to show their accomplishment in the restoration of the Jews, but to connect them with some of those arrangements of providence which have been, and are still, passing before us.

You know, brethren, that the Lord has been visiting the world, as the avenger of His law. He that dasheth in pieces, has come