

The Sure Performance of Prophecy.

by John Gill

The sermon discusses the certain performance of prophecy, particularly in relation to the kingdom of Christ, and the role of the Pope of Rome in the prophecy.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:7, Matthew 4:13

Topics: "Fulfillment of Prophecy", "The Kingdom of Christ"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the certainty of prophecy's fulfillment, particularly regarding the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. He reflects on past prophecies that have been realized, such as Christ's ministry in Galilee, and argues that just as these have come to pass, so too will the remaining prophecies concerning the increase of Christ's government and the destruction of antichrist be fulfilled. Gill highlights the zeal of the Lord as the driving force behind these fulfillments, assuring believers of God's unwavering commitment to His promises. He encourages the congregation to trust in God's word and to remain steadfast in prayer as they await the complete realization of His prophecies.

Transcript

THE

SURE PERFORMANCE OF PROPHECY.

A SERMON,

Preached at a Wednesday's Evening Lecture,

in

GREAT EAST-CHEAP, Jan. 1, 1755.

Isaiah 9:7 (latter part)

--The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

In my last annual Sermon save one, on this occasion, I discoursed concerning the glorious things foretold of the church of God in the latter day, both in the spiritual and personal reign of Christ; and now I shall treat of the certain performance of those things. I gave an hint in my last annual Discourse, that whereas a great portion of prophecy, particularly in the book of Revelation, has been already fulfilled, there is great

reason to believe the rest will be; and this hint I shall pursue and enlarge upon at this time; and argue from the actual accomplishment of some things relating to the kingdom of Christ, to the certain completion of others; and into this train and course of reasoning I shall be naturally and easily led in considering the words of my text; which refer partly to the performance of some things foretold, since fulfilled, and partly to others which yet remain to be accomplished; and as sure as the one is fulfilled, so sure shall the other.

The things that are already performed are, The appearance of Christ in the land of Galilee, which is predicted (ver. 1) and which land, as it had been afflicted by the Assyrians, and was to be moved so by the Romans, as it has been in the times of Vespasian and Titus, as the history of Josephus shows; and as it was vile and mean, and lightly esteemed of by men, it should be made glorious and honorable, as the word signifies, particularly by the presence, ministry and miracles of Christ in it; and to this purpose it is quoted and applied by the evangelist Matthew (4:13-23), from whence it appears, that Christ first began to preach in that country: that he called his first disciples near the sea of Galilee; and that he went through that whole land, and taught and preached in the synagogues in it, and healed all diseases; here he wrought his first miracle of turning water into wine; here he lived the greatest part of his private life; and here he resided chiefly during his public ministry; here he promised to meet his disciples after his resurrection, and here he did: in short, being educated and brought up in this country in the former part of his life, and conversing here so much in the latter part of it; the Jews concluded he was born here, and confronted his Messiahship with it, shall Christ come out of Galilee (John 7:41)?

And hence he was called by them Jesus of Galilee, and his followers Galileans: all which confirm the truth of this prophecy, and the performance of it; and it is with respect to this, no doubt, that the ancient Jews expected that the Messiah would first appear in Galilee. Another event in consequence of the former is foretold, and that is, the illumination of the Galileans by the ministry of Christ among them (ver. 2). These people were an ignorant and illiterate people; their common language was rustic, rude and barbarous; their speech betrayed them, as Peter's did, who therefore was supposed to be a Galilean; they were reckoned a people that knew not the law, and were accursed: it was observed, that no prophet arose among them, and no good thing was expected of them; and so are here said to walk in darkness, and to dwell in the land of the shadow of death; and yet these people, according to this prophecy, were first favored with seeing Christ, the light of the world, both with their bodily eyes and with the eyes of their understanding, enlightened by his ministry; the great light of the gospel shining in them, removed their darkness, and filled them with spiritual light and knowledge.

Hence, as here predicted, There was a multiplication of them; thou hast multiplied the nation, that is, Galilee of the nations; which was multiplied with glory and honor, with light and knowledge, with joy and comfort, and with a number of truly gracious souls that believed in Christ; the five hundred brethren to whom our Lord appeared at once after his resurrection, seem to be Galileans, when he showed himself on a mountain in their country to the eleven disciples; for it will not be easy to say where there was such a number of brethren, or believers, but in Galilee; it is certain their number at Jerusalem was not so large; being about an hundred and twenty.

It is foretold that there should be great joy upon all this; indeed our version renders it not increased the joy; but the Keri, or marginal reading of the Hebrew text is, and increased joy unto it, unto the nation: or it may be rendered with an interrogation, as it is by some, and may take in both the textual and marginal reading, hast thou not increased joy unto it? and in one way or other it must be rendered, or otherwise there is a glaring contradiction in the text ; for it follows, they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil; phrases expressive of the greatest joy among men; as there

doubtless was among the Galileans when Christ was present with them, and his gospel preached to them; which is a joyful sound, and brings good tidings of good things, peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation by the incarnate Redeemer; and so joy along with it, wherever it comes with power, and is received and embraced; as it did in Samaria, and among the Gentiles.

The ground and reason of this joy would be a deliverance from a burdensome yoke, and from a staff and rod of affliction; which was effected by Christ, who has delivered all his people, and so those believing Galileans, from the yoke of the ceremonial law, a yoke of bondage intolerable; from the tyranny of Satan, and from the servitude of silk; and which should be wrought as easily, and as suddenly, as the deliverance of Israel from the Midianites by Gideon; Christ's own arm bringing salvation to him, and his people, without the help of man: for every battle of the warrior is with confused noise; with the shoutings of soldiers, blowing of trumpets, beating of drums, rattling of armor, and garments rolled in blood; the garments of the slain rolled in their own blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire; through the flaming love and burning zeal and affection of Christ for his people, who, is prophesied of as the author of all this, and is the child that should be born, and the Son that should be given; for not Hezekiah is here meant, as the Jews would have it, who at the time of this prophecy was at least ten or eleven years of age, and to whom the august titles after given can by no means agree.

The child here is the same that is prophesied of, chapter 7:14, that should be born of a virgin, and called Immanuel; even Jesus the son of Mary, born in the city of David, a Saviour, Christ the Lord, whose birth the angel declared to the shepherds; the Word that has been made flesh, and has dwelt among men; he is the Son of God, his only-begotten Son, his Son in such sense as no other is, and is the unspeakable gift of his love to men. He is here represented as a king, on whose shoulders the government should be; not meaning the government of the whole world, which belongs to him as God and creator; the kingdom is his, and he is the governor among the nations (Ps. 22:28); but the government of the church, his mediatorial kingdom, which is delegated to him, and devolved upon him as king of Zion, king of saints; a kingdom appointed to him, and for which he is and will be accountable to his Father, and will give it up to him complete and perfect and God shall be all in all; his names and titles follow, and his name shall be called ; not that he should be called in common by all the following names, but that he should be or answer to what is signified by them: so he is wonderful in his person as God and man, having two natures united in him; in his offices, in his life and death, in his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, session at the right hand of God, and second coming to judgment: counsellor or, as the Septuagint rendered it, the angel of the great council: who assisted in the everlasting council held concerning the salvation of men; and who by his Spirit in his word, and by his ministers, gives the most wholesome counsel and advice to saints and sinners respecting their spiritual and eternal welfare: the mighty God, as appears from the perfections of deity in him, from the works done by him, from the worship given to him, and from his names and titles: the everlasting Father, who has a spiritual seed and offspring given him, whom he loves with an everlasting love, takes an everlasting care of, and makes everlasting provision for: the prince of Peace, the author of peace between God and men, between Jew and Gentile, and the giver of spiritual and eternal peace.

Now all the above things the zeal of the Lord of hosts has performed already. The things which remain to be performed, are the increase of Christ's Government, and the peace, order and establishment, of it; which are predicted in the beginning of this verse, the latter part of which I have read unto you. The kingdom of Christ is set up in the world, and there was an increase of it in the first times of the Gospel, both in Judea and in the Gentile world, but it was but small in comparison of what it will be; the stone was

cut out without hands, but it is not yet, as it will be, a great mountain, which will fill the whole earth; as yet the kingdoms of this world are not Christ's, as they will be, when he shall be king over all the earth; when the Jews will be converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles will be brought in.

Little peace has attended the kingdom and church of Christ as yet, but there will be abundance of it, when there will be an increase of his government; when his "kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth," then there will be peace without and peace within; war shall cease from among the nations of the earth, and they shall learn it no more; the church will, be free from persecution, and no more annoyed with it; there will be none to hurt and destroy in all the Lord's holy mountain; and there will be no more animosities and divisions among the saints; "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim" (Isa. 2:4; 11:9, 13): and though Christ is upon the throne of his Father David, and has appointed and ordered the form of government, and enacted laws, and settled ordinances for the execution of it; yet it does not appear with that order and regularity as it will, when the church shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and so continue, being an everlasting kingdom.

Now from the exact performance of all the above things in the context, and of all others, we may reasonably and strongly conclude the certain accomplishment of all things relating to the increase, peace, prosperity, order and settlement of the kingdom of Christ; and this is what I shall at present insist upon, in the following method. I shall consider the things that remain to be performed, and the certain performance of them. Show to what the performance of them is to be ascribed; to the zeal of the Lord of hosts.

The things that are not yet fulfilled, but will be, as may be argued from the performance of many things already relating to the same subject: and these are the destruction of antichrist, the more extensive call of the Gentiles, and the conversion of the Jews, the setting up by these means the kingdom of Christ in greater glory in the world, and his second coming, which will introduce his personal reign. First, The destruction of antichrist which as I have observed in the Sermon first referred to, is the leading event to the glory of Christ's spiritual kingdom; which cannot greatly increase, nor the peace of it, so long as this enemy stands in the way; and therefore he must be removed, as it is foretold he shall be.

All that believe a divine revelation allow that there is, or will be, what is commonly called antichrist; not only Protestants, but even Jews and Papists: though both these latter have very foolish and fabulous notions concerning him; yet a general notion they have, which is founded on prophecy. I shall therefore lay before you the more considerable prophecies concerning him, and observe what are fulfilled, and from thence argue the certain performance of those which relate to his utter and final ruin.

I shall not take notice of what is only incidentally and occasionally dropped concerning him: such incidental and occasional hints we have as early as the times of David. In his Psalms there are frequent hints of him, and of his destruction; as that the man of the earth shall no more oppress, when the Lord shall reign for ever, and the heathen or Gentiles, a name sometimes given to Papists, shall perish out of his land; and when the Messiah is said to wound the head over many countries; that is, antichrist; who has reigned over the kings and kingdoms of the earth: and respect seems to be had to his followers, when it is wished, that the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked be no more (Ps. 10:16, 18; 110:6; 104:35); at the end of which verse the word Hallelujah is first used, and which is used at the destruction of mystical Babylon.

But I shall only observe such as purposely and largely predict him and his ruin, and shall begin, 1st, With the famous prophecy of him in the seventh of Daniel, in which the prophet is said to have a vision of four

beasts rising out of the sea; that is, of the four monarchies rising up in the world, the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman: the fourth and last beast is the Roman empire, said to have ten horns; now among these rises up a little horn, different from them, and which plucks up three of them; and it is said to have "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a look more stout than its fellows; to have a mouth speaking great things against the most high, and to make war with the saints, and prevail over them, and wear them out; and to think to change times and laws;" and thus it is to continue until a time, and times, and the dividing of time, and then to have his dominion taken away, destroyed and consumed.

Now this horn cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes, as Grotius, Junius, and others have thought; for not a single person or king is meant by a horn, but a kingdom or state, and a succession of rulers and governors in it; as by the other ten horns are meant ten kingdoms (ver. 24). And besides, this little horn is a part of the fourth, and not of the third beast, to whom Antiochus belonged; and was to rise, not in the third, but in the fourth monarchy, not in the Grecian, but in the Roman empire; and moreover was to continue until the coming of Christ, even until the spiritual coming of Christ in the latter day, and when his spiritual kingdom will take place in the world and as there is no other that has appeared in the Roman empire but antichrist, or the Pope of Rome, to whom the characters agree as to him; it may be safely concluded he is intended, and as will more fully appear by the account of him; who described, By his name and title, a little horn.

An horn is an emblem of strength, power and authority, and denotes a strong and powerful principality or kingdom, as the ten horns do, as before observed; the allusion is to the horns of beasts, in which their strength lies, and with which they push their enemies and defend themselves: this horn indeed was but a little one, rose from small beginnings, and at its height was but such, in comparison of others; so the Pope of Rome, as to his ecclesiastic power, was but at first a common minister, pastor, or bishop of a single church; then became metropolitan of all Italy, and at last commenced universal bishop: though this seems rather to regard him as a temporal prince; who was but very little indeed at his first appearance; and, when considered only in his own domains, at highest, was but little in comparison of the other horns or kingdoms; though being allowed to exercise power in the rest of the kingdoms, and their power and strength being given to him, he was so formidable that none could withstand him, or make war with him, (Rev. 17:13; 13:4).

By his rise and original from among the other horns or kingdoms, and his connexion with them; he is said to come up among them. When the northern barbarous nations broke, into the empire, and set up ten kingdoms in it, this little horn sprung up among them; and while they were forming kingdoms for themselves, he was contriving one for himself; they arose at the same time, and reigned together: so the ten horns in the Revelation, which are the same with these, and are there, as here, interpreted ten kings, are said to receive power, as kings, one hour with the beast (Rev. 17:12), the same as this little horn.

Indeed in verse 24 this little horn is said to rise after them, the other ten; not after the ten kingdoms were at end, but after they were set up, and constituted, and established; as it was proper they should, since they were to give their strength, power and kingdom to the beast (Rev. 17:13), by which he became a horn, a temporal prince. The Septuagint renders it behind them; which Mr. Mede understands of his growing up unawares, imperceptibly, unnoticed, and unobserved by them, till he overtopped them.

He is said to be divers or different from the first horns; they only had and exercised a secular power, but he, besides his temporal authority, had and exercised an ecclesiastic and spiritual one; he not only had power over the bodies and estates, but over the souls and consciences of men; and even over the other ten horns or kingdoms, which they had not over one another. hence he is represented by two beasts in the

Revelation, the one describing him in his secular, the other in his spiritual authority, as we shall see anon; and this made him different from other kings and princes: Moreover, before him three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots, or, as in verse 20, before whom three fell, and which is interpreted (v. 24) of his subduing three kings or kingdoms; which according to Sir Isaac Newton, were the exarchate of Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards, and the senate and dukedom of Rome.

The bishop of Cloger, more lately, has expressed them thus, Campagnia of Rome, the exarchate of Ravenna, and the region of Pentapolis; these were plucked up by Pipin and Charlemagne, kings of France, and given to the Pope, and were confirmed to him by their successor Lewis the pious; and make up what is called the patrimony of St. Peter; and in memory of this a piece of Mosaic work was made, and put up in the Pope's palace; in which were represented St. Peter with three keys in his lap, signifying the three keys of the three parts of his patrimony; and to show his sovereignty over them, the pope to this day wears a triple crown.

How surprisingly does the prophecy open unto us! An event is here predicted above a thousand years, twelve or thirteen hundred years, before it was accomplished. This little horn is further described by its eyes and look; its eyes were like the eyes of man; strange for a horn to have eyes, stranger still for the horn of a beast to have eyes as the eyes of man. These are thought by some to denote the pretended sanctity and religion of the pope of Rome, or antichrist, who, though a beast, would be thought to be a man, a religious creature; others think they design his pretended modesty, humanity and courtesy, when he is all the reverse; but rather his insight into the sacred scriptures, and controversies about them; he pretends to setting himself up to be an infallible interpreter of them, and judge of all controversies; though these eyes seem better to signify what he really had, and not what he pretended to; and so may denote his sagacity and penetration, his craft and cunning, his looking out sharp to get what power and dominion he could, both temporal and spiritual; and his watchfulness and carefulness to keep what he had got, that none encroached upon it, or took part of it away from him and they may also design all instruments and means by which he inspects his own affairs, and those of others; particularly the order of the Jesuits, which are, as his eyes, every where; spies in all kingdoms and courts, that pry into the mysteries of state, and by one means or another get knowledge of what is done in the councils and cabinets of princes: and how many eyes this horn had, is not said; nor is it easy to say how many the Pope has; he has as many as Argus, and more too, and these sharp and piercing: his look is said to be more stout than his fellows; either than his fellow-bishops, claiming an authority over them, giving out that he is universal bishop or rather, than his fellow-horns, the kings and princes of the earth: having a look more bold and daring, more arrogant and impudent; assuming that power and authority to himself they do not; all power in heaven, and in earth; a power to depose kings, and absolve their subjects from allegiance to them; a power over the minds and consciences of men or, as it may be rendered, whose appearance is greater than his fellows; makes a greater show and figure, appears in greater pomp, splendor and glory than the kings; unless this can be understood of the society and college of his cardinals.

This horn is also described by its mouth, and what that spoke; it is said to speak great things, yea very great things; as the Pope of Rome has, in favor of himself; as that he his head of the church, and Christ's vicar on earth: declares himself infallible, and to have a power over the kings and princes of the earth; nay, he is said to speak great words against the Most High; setting himself up as a rival, and upon an equality with him; taking upon him to forgive sin, and to make laws binding on the consciences of men, contrary to the scriptures; and preferring his own decrees, and the traditions of the church, to the word of God; and thus the beast of Rome is described in Revelation 13:5, 6.

This horn is described by what he did, or thought to do; he is said to make war with the saints, and prevail against them and wear them out; which respects the wars of the popes of Rome with the Waldenses and Albigenses, whom they slew in great numbers, and got the victory over; and what by their oppressions and persecutions, murders and massacres, have tired and near wore out the patience of the saints and whereas the beast, the same with this little horn, shall make war with the two witnesses, and overcome and slay them; the saints will then seem to be quite wore out and consumed, when their dead carcasses will lie in the streets of the, great city unburied; so that they will seem to be all destroyed, and be thought by the Papists to be so; and hence that rejoicing and sending gifts to each other, because these witnesses are no more (Rev. 11:8-10), also he shall think to change times and laws, which in chapter 2:21 is ascribed to God as peculiar to him, and joined with removing and setting up kings; which is what the Pope of Rome has taken to himself; to alter the forms and constitutions of kingdoms, and to set up and pull down kings at his pleasure, and free their subjects from obligation and obedience to them; as also to change the use of times and seasons, by setting apart holy days for the commemoration of his canonized saints; and by appointing such days in the week, and such a season in the year, for abstinence from meats; as well as also to change laws, the laws of God and man, and dispense with both, and make new laws and canons to be observed.

And this power of his was to continue until a time, and times, and the dividing of time, or half a time, as in Revelation 12:14, where the same way of speaking is used, borrowed from hence; time signifies a year, the longest measure of time we have, times two years, and a dividing of time half a year; in all, three years and a half; the same with the forty two months, the time of the beast's continuance, (Rev. 13:5) and of the treading down of the holy city (Rev. 11:2), and which answer to 1260 days, the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, verse 3, by which are meant so many years; and so long the little horn or beast is to continue; but when this time is up, then his dominion shall be taken away, and be consumed and destroyed; yea, because of the words this horn spake, the beast will be slain, his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame (Dan. 7:11, 26), the whole empire shall be destroyed, the capital of it shall be burnt with fire, the ten kings shall hate the whore, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; this will be the catastrophe of the little horn.

And now, who that attentively considers how every part of this vision and prophecy has been exactly fulfilled, except the last, can hesitate in his mind, or doubt one moment of the certain performance of that, even the utter destruction of this little horn, or antichrist? The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this, as well as all the rest. 2dly, Another famous prophecy of antichrist, and his destruction, we have in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 where he is described, By his names and characters; he is called the man of sin; one addicted and given to sin in a grievous manner, not notoriously sinful, a spiritual wickedness in high places; one guilty of all manner of sin, as the Popes of Rome have been; lying, perjury, adultery, incest, sodomy, simony, sorcery, and every thing that is bad: hence their seat is called Sodom and Egypt, and the antichristian whore, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth, all centering here; and therefore with great propriety is he said to be the son of perdition, a name given to Judas that betrayed our Lord (John 17:12) and rightly belongs to antichrist, who is the Apollyon and destroyer of the souls of men, by his false doctrine and worship, and will himself go into perdition: he is also represented as he that opposeth; that opposeth Christ, and is an adversary of his, and therefore called antichrist: he opposes him in his offices; in his kingly office, by asserting himself to be the head of the church; in his priestly office, by pretending to offer up Christ again in the sacrifice of the mass, when he by one offering has perfected the whole work of atonement; and in his prophetic office by coining new doctrines and articles of faith moreover, he exalteth himself above all that is called God; above the gods of the heathens, who ascribe

the government of the heavens to one, of the earth to another, of the sea to another, and of the winds to another; but this haughty creature assumes all power to himself, in heaven, earth and hell: he exalts himself above angels, who are called gods (Ps. 8:4).

In his bulls he has commanded angels to take such a soul out of purgatory, and to carry such a one to heaven: and above all civil magistrates, who are called gods (Ps. 82:5), assuming a power over them to depose them at pleasure making an emperor to hold his stirrup whilst he alighted from his horse and got upon it, and trampling on his neck, using those words in Psalm 91:13, and throwing a king under his table to lick bones, whilst he was eating: yea, he sitteth in the temple of God as god, shewing himself that he is god; he rose up and appeared in the church of God, at least so by profession, where he took his place, and, becoming apostate, here he continues, and shows himself as if he was God; admitting his creatures and flatterers to call him God on earth, and our Lord God the Pope; receiving worship from them, and assuming that which is the peculiar prerogative of God, to forgive sin.

Moreover, he is called the mystery of iniquity; Mystery is one of the names of the whore of Babylon, and was formerly put upon the mitres of the Popes: it may respect both doctrines and practices, which were set afoot in the apostles time, and began to appear and work in Simon Magus, and his followers, and which centered in the papacy. Once more, he is called the wicked one (anom), a lawless person; that dispenses with the laws of God and man, setting up himself above all law; giving out that he is not subject to any human judicature; that he is the spiritual man that judges all, but is judged of none, being not accountable to any; yea, though he should lead millions of souls to hell, yet none ought to say, "O Lord the Pope, what dost thou?"

He is described in this prophecy by his appearance, and manner of entrance, and his influence over men. There was something that let or hindered him from making his appearance sooner than he did, which being removed, he was to be and has been revealed; this was the Roman empire and emperors, which so long as they were, and Rome the seat of their empire, he could not take his place and seat, and appear in his pomp and grandeur; but this let was removed, partly by Constantine conquering the heathen emperors, abolishing paganism, and establishing Christianity in the empire, and bestowing great riches on the church; but more so by removing the seat of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, called after his name Constantinople, which opened the way for the bishop of Rome to take his place; and chiefly and last of all, the empire being divided into eastern and western, the latter became extinct in Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, who resigned to Odoacer, who took upon him the title, not of emperor of Rome but king of Italy, and retired, from Rome to Ravenna; and the seat being empty, was soon filled by the Pope of Rome, and he quickly appeared in his grandeur and glory; whose coming was after the working of Satan; he came in like him, a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer, and under his influence, and by his assistance: with all power; with pretensions to all power in heaven and in even to power next to omnipotence: and signs and lying wonders; pretending to work miracles, though all were shams and lies, of which the popish legends are full; and under a show of righteousness deceived many; and meeting with carnal professors that loved not the truth, they were given up in a judicial manner to believe his lies, as, that he was head of the church, Christ's vicar, had a power to forgive sin, and grant pardons and indulgences; particularly that great lie of transubstantiation, that he and his priests have power to transmute the bread and wine in the Lord's supper into the very body and blood of Christ; receiving which lies spoken in hypocrisy, they bring damnation upon themselves.

And here give me leave, To observe another passage, though not in this prophecy, yet delivered out by the same inspired writer, which predicts some of the notorious doctrines and practices of antichrist; it is in

1 Timothy 4:1-3 where the apostle foretells a departure from the faith in after-times, and the appearance of seducing spirits, who should teach doctrines of devils. The doctrines of demon-worship; like that of the heathens, their demons being a middle sort of beings between God and men, and mediated between them; and such are the angels and saints departed, the Papists direct men to pray unto; and which is called worshipping devils and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood (Rev. 9:20), forbidding to marry; matrimony, though God's ordinance, and honorable, is forbidden popish priests, and celibacy is enjoined, under a notion of sanctity and purity; and which is the source of great debauchery and uncleanness among them: commanding to abstain from meats: as on Wednesdays and Fridays in every week, and during the quadragesima or Lent, the fast of forty days.

And now whereas it is most clearly manifest, that all these characters of antichrist, and all these things predicted of him hundreds of years before his appearance, exactly answers to the Pope of Rome, and have been punctually performed; there can be no reason to doubt of the certain performance of what the same prophetic spirit has declared concerning his destruction; as that the Lord shall consume him with his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming; that is, by the spiritual and powerful preaching of the gospel, attended with the presence of Christ in the beginning of his spiritual reign; when the whole earth will be enlightened with his glory, and antichrist, and all antichristian darkness, doctrine and worship shall disappear; and the rather this is to be credited, since it receives confirmation from a prophecy of Isaiah, delivered many hundreds of years before this, in much the same language, and from whom the apostle seems to borrow his words; for speaking of Christ, he says, he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked: that wicked lawless one, antichrist: The Lord in his great zeal will perform this. 3dly, I will just observe, in brief, the account we have of antichrist in the book of the Revelation: in chapter thirteen he is described, both in his civil and ecclesiastic capacity, by two beasts; the one rising out of the sea, that is, out of the commotions made in the empire by the northern nations; when he appeared as a temporal prince, having his seat on the seven-hill-city, signified by seven heads, and power over the ten kingdoms or ten horns; and is compared to a leopard for his swiftness and insidiousness in obtaining power; to a bear for his cruelty, and to a lion for his strength and terror; and became so powerful, notwithstanding the deadly wound, as to be admired and feared by all the world; and is described much in the same manner as the little horn in Daniel, having a mouth speaking blasphemies against God, his tabernacle and people: and power to make war with the saints, and overcome them, and permission to continue exactly the same time.

The other beast, an emblem of him in his ecclesiastic capacity, is said to rise out of the earth; from the dregs of Christians, earthly, carnal and corrupt, from an apostate church; and pretending to great humility, calling himself servus servorum; having two horns like a lamb, as if very meek, humble and harmless; but spake like a dragon, when he uttered his bulls and anathemas: he is represented as exercising all the power he had as a temporal prince, to oblige the world to worship him, and as doing lying miracles to deceive men; enjoining them to worship his image on pain of death, and causing all to have his mark in their right hand or forehead, or else be deprived of the common privilege of mankind in buying and selling; all which has been done by the Romish antichrist; and the account is concluded with the number of his name 666, about which there have been many conjectures; but none bid fairer than the ancient one of Ireneus, which is Lateinos, the letters of which amount to this number; this was the name of a man, a king of Italy.

Now the church of Rome is the Latin church: its service is in the Latin tongue; the Pope is head of it; and his seat is in the Latin empire. In chapter seventeen antichrist is represented by a woman sitting on a

beast with seven heads and ten horns, which designs him in his twofold capacity as before; and as sitting on many waters, interpreted of people and nations; and is described as a whore by her dress and attire, by her fornication, filthiness and murder; all which exactly points at, and has been fulfilled in the church of Rome.

And now, who that considers these things, and observes the exact accomplishment of them, but will see abundant reason to believe, that what is said of the ruin of this antichrist shall be performed; that the seven vials of God's wrath shall be poured out on the antichristian states; that the whore shall be burnt with fire, and that her seat Rome, mystical Babylon, shall meet with the same fate, and the beast go into perdition? The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Rev. 16:1; 17:8, 16; 18:10).

Secondly, The increase of the kingdom of Christ in the latter day, foretold in this verse, will be owing to the vast numbers of Gentiles that shall be called, and to the conversion of the Jews. Many and ancient are the prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles; as, that when Shiloh, or the Messiah should come, the gathering of the people should be to him; that he should be set up as an ensign to them, and they should seek to him, and he be a light unto them, and the covenant of them; and the abundance of them should be converted to him (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 11:10; 43:6; 60:4, 5); which had their completion in part in the first times of the gospel, by the ministry of the apostles every where; and especially when the Roman empire, or the whole world became Christian; and also at the time of the Reformation; but as yet they have not had their full accomplishment, as they will when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's, and all kings and nations shall serve and worship him: and since they have been in part fulfilled, we may be assured of the full performance of them; since we have seen the kingdom of the stone cut out without hands, as Mr.

Mede distinguishes, we need not doubt of the kingdom of the mountain, which will fill the whole earth, taking place: the conversion of the Jews, as a body, as a nation of men, is what is predicted, and will make much for the increase and glory of Christ's kingdom. That people have been of old the subject of prophecies, which in a variety of instances have been fulfilled. It was foretold to their great ancestor, Abraham, that they his posterity should be strangers, and serve in a land not theirs in much affliction four hundred years, and then come out with great substance (Gen. 15:13, 14), as it is well known they did at that exact time; their going to captivity in Babylon, and their return from thence at the end of 70 years, were predicted many years before these events (Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10), which were punctually accomplished: the various straits, difficulties, and distresses these people should come into their sins, at different times; the besieging of their cities, and the dreadful famine they should be reduced to, so as to eat their own flesh, and delicate women their own children, as at the siege of Samaria, and at the siege of Jerusalem, both by the Chaldeans and Romans; and their dispersion all over the world, and even the very characters of their enemies, are given us, being of a far country, of a fierce look, and of a language they understood not: all these, with many other things, are foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 28:20-68, some of them, at the distance of two thousand years, and which have had their exact accomplishment: but what is most surprising of all, is the continuance of this people as a distinct people, notwithstanding all this, as it was said they should, and as the Lord promised he would not cast them away, destroy them utterly, or make a full end of them, as he has of other nations their enemies (Lev. 26:44; Jer. 30:11); who are no more, nor their names to be heard of any where, as the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and others; but these are still in being; yea, what is more wonderful, that several of those nations among whom they are now dispersed, have been even since their scattering among them, so mixed and confounded with other people, that they are not able to distinguish one from another, or trace their original, as particularly in Spain, France and England; yet, these people remain a distinct people, as they do every where, without

any king over them, not having their own magistrates, and without the observance of many of their own laws: now what can be the reason of this? no other, than as the tribe of Judah was kept a distinct tribe till the Messiah came, that it might appear that he sprung from it, according to prophecy; so the Jews are kept a distinct people unto the time of their conversion, that they may be manifest to all the world.

Moreover, even the ignorance and blindness of this people, their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah, and their obstinate persistence in it, are the fulfilling of prophecy; both our Lord, and the apostle Paul, when they speak (John 12:37-41; Rom. 11:8-10) of these things, refer to ancient prophecy, as being no other than what were foretold. Seeing then all these things concerning them have been accomplished, we ought most firmly to believe, that what concerns them in futurity also will; as that they shall seek and find the Lord, and David their king; that a spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured on them, and they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn; and shall turn to the Lord, and receive him as the Messiah, and embrace his gospel and ordinances; and so all Israel shall be saved in a spiritual sense, and shall return to their own land, and resettle there, as is foretold they shall (Hos. 3:5; Zech. 12:10; 2 Cor. 3:16; Rom. 11:25, 26; Ezek. 37:21, 22): The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Thirdly, By the above means the kingdom of Christ will be set up in the world in greater glory than now it is, of which we have no reason to doubt; especially when we observe the several steps which were to be taken, and have been taken towards the advancement of it; as the opening of the seven seals, and blowing of six of the trumpets. The seven seals are so many several steps, and gradual advances to introduce the gospel, kingdom and church of Christ into the world. The opening of the first seal brought the gospel into the Gentile world, in which Christ is represented riding on a white horse with a bow, and conquering, and to conquer; the second, third and fourth seals opened, brought the sword, famine and pestilence into the Roman empire, as God's judgments for the ill usage and persecution of the preachers and professors of the gospel; and the fifth seal represents the souls under the altar crying for vengeance on their enemies for shedding their blood; and the sixth opened brings utter destruction on the whole Pagan empire, as such, signified by the darkening of the sun, moon and stars, and by other things.

And here one might have expected that the kingdom of Christ would have been now set up in all its glory: but though here were peace and prosperity introduced into the church of God, and it was greatly enlarged; yet the worldly wealth and riches brought into it, issued in corruption and apostasy of it; and brought in the papacy, which arose, and continued, and still does, and stands in the way of Christ's kingdom. The seventh seal opened, brings in seven angels with seven trumpets to blow, six of which are blown already.

The first four blown, brought in the northern nations, the Goths, Huns, Vandals, &c., into the western empire, which overrun several countries, entered Italy, sacked and burnt Rome itself, signified by the burning mountain, and spread darkness and ignorance over all the empire, designed by the smiting of the sun, moon, and stars; and which broke it to pieces, and divided it into ten kingdoms, signified by the ten toes in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the ten horns in Daniel's vision.

The fifth trumpet brought in Mahomet and his Saracens, the locusts; and the sixth trumpet the Turks, the four angels loosed at the river Euphrates into the eastern empire, which set up a kingdom there that still continues. And now since six of these trumpets have been blown, and the effects have followed predicted by them; why should we not most firmly believe, that the seventh trumpet will be blown, when the mystery of God will be finished: when the kingdoms of this world will become our Lord's; when he will take to himself his great power and reign; when he will destroy them that destroy the earth, and give a reward to his servants, and to all that fear his name!

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Rev. 10:7; 11:15-18). Fourthly, As by the above events, the spiritual reign of Christ will take place in the world, so by his second coming the personal reign will be introduced, which will last a thousand years; and from the fulfilment of prophecy concerning the first coming of Christ, which is predicted in the context, as we have seen, we may most strongly argue the certain performance of all that respects his second coming.

He came at first: exactly at the time pointed out in prophecy; before the scepter departed from Judah, while the second temple was standing, into which he came, as he was to do, and just at the expiration of Daniel's weeks. All characters and circumstances in prophecy meet in him; all things concerning him in the law, psalms and prophets, had their fulfilling end in him; concerning his birth, and the place of it: his mean appearance in the world; his doctrines and miracles; his sufferings and death, and many particular circumstances respecting them; as the betraying of him by one of his disciples; selling him for thirty pieces of silver; crucifying him between two thieves; piercing his hands, feet and side; giving him gall and vinegar to drink; casting lots on his vesture, with other things; also his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God.

And since these things have been completely fulfilled, what room or reason is there to doubt that he will appear a second time without sin to salvation? The angels at his ascension affirmed he would descend from heaven, as he ascended: the apostle Paul assures us he shall descend from heaven with the voice of an archangel and be revealed from thence with his mighty angels; and he himself has said no less than three times, in the close of the canon of the scripture, Lo, I come quickly.

Let us believe therefore that he will come, and make all things new; produce new heavens, and a new earth, and set up his tabernacle among his people, and dwell with them, and they reign with him; The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Which leads me, To consider to what the performance of all this will be owing; to the zeal of the Lord of hosts: he is the Lord of hosts or armies, the maker of the host of heaven, and the disposer of them, and rules among them, and does whatever he pleases; nothing is impossible with him, or too hard for him; and as Abraham believed that God, who promised, was also able to perform; so should we believe, that whatever the Lord of hosts has prophesied of, he is able to fulfill, and will fulfill; his truth and faithfulness are engaged, as for the performance of his promise, so of his prophecies; he is the unchangeable Jehovah, God that cannot lie, and who never repents of what he has spoken, but makes all good: his zeal moves and puts him upon it; which may be understood either of his wrath and indignation against his enemies, that jealousy of his that smokes against them; that zeal and vengeance with which he is sometimes clad: this will put him upon performing all that he has said concerning antichrist, against whom his indignation must be raised; who has spoke great things against him, and blasphemed his name, opposed his Son, his kingdom and interest, and persecuted his people: or else it may design his great love and affection.

As zeal with men, when right, is no other than fervent charity, burning love, and flaming affection, so it may be considered here; and mean his love for himself, his zeal for his own glory, which is his ultimate end in creation, in providence, in his works of grace, and which will be answered in the destruction of antichrist, and setting up the kingdom of his Son in the world: also his strong love and affection to Christ, both as his own Son, and the mediator between him and his people; and therefore it may be depended on, he will make him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth: to which may be added, his great love to his church and people; which has been so great as to give his Son for them, to become incarnate, and to suffer and die in their room, and to make him king over them to protect and defend them; and therefore it need not be doubted that the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to them, according to

promise and prophecy (Dan.7:27); The zeal of the Lord of hosts, the zeal of his house, and for it, will perform this.

I shall close with a word or two. What has been said will serve greatly to support the credit of divine revelation; the sacred Word will appear from hence to be indeed the Word of God, and not the word of men; we may be assured the scripture is divinely inspired, and is a sure word of prophecy; for what else could have foretold such numbers of events, which have been exactly fulfilled: particularly what relate to Jews and Papists, who are two such living and standing proofs of the truth of the divine revelation, that all the Deists in the world are not able to set aside?

Likewise, this may serve to encourage our faith, as to the performance of whatsoever has been spoken by the Lord; for if he performs all things for us in providence, as he does for particular persons, as Job, David, and others, as he did; then much more may we believe that he will perform all that he has said he will do for himself, for his Son, and for his church and people in the world. But then, though he has so particularly prophesied of, and so peremptorily promised these things, yet he will be enquired of by his people to do them.

We should therefore pray continually to him, and give him no rest day nor night until they are accomplished; and for the accomplishment of which we should quietly wait; for there is an appointed time, and when that comes there will be no tarrying: Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days (Dan. 7:12). I add no more but this wish, the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting of Christ (2 Thess. 3:5).

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