

CHAPTER 1

The mind of God is revealed to this prophet, and by him to the people, in the first three chapters, by signs and types, but afterwards only by discourse. In this chapter we have,

- I. The general title of the whole book (v. 1).
- II. Some particular instructions which he was ordered to give to the people of God.
 1. He must convince them of their sin in going a whoring from God, by marrying a wife of whoredoms (v. 2, 3).
 2. He must foretel the ruin coming upon them for their sin, in the names of his sons, which signified God's disowning and abandoning them (v. 4-6, 8, 9).
 3. He must speak comfortable to the kingdom of Judah, which still retained the pure worship of God, and assure them of the salvation of the Lord (v. 7).
 4. He must give an intimation of the great mercy God had in store both for Israel and Judah, in the latter days (v. 10, 11), for in this prophecy many precious promises of mercy are mixed with the threatenings of wrath.

HOSEA 1:1

THE TIME OF HOSEA'S PROPHECY

1. Here is the prophet's name and surname; which he himself, as other prophets, prefixes to his prophecy, for the satisfaction of all that he is ready to attest what he writes to be of God; he sets his hand to it, as that which he will stand by. His name, *Hosea*, or *Hosea* (for it is the very same with Joshua's original name), signifies a *saviour*; for prophets were instruments of salvation to the people of God, so are faithful ministers; they help to save many a soul from death, by saving it from sin. his surname was *Ben-Beri*, or *the son of Beri*. As with us now, so with them then, some had their surname from their place, as Micah the Morashite, Nahum the Elkoshite; others from their parents, as Joel the son of Bethuel, and here Hosea the son of Beri. And perhaps they made use of that distinction when the eminence of their parents was such as would bring

honour upon them; but it is a groundless conceit of the Jews that where a prophet's father is named he also was a prophet. *Beer* signifies a *well*, which may put us in mind of the fountain of life and living waters from which prophets are drawn and must be continually drawing.

2. Here are his authority and commission: *The word of the Lord came to him. It was to him*; it came with power and efficacy to him; it was revealed to him as a real thing, and not a fancy or imagination of his own, in some such way as God then discovered himself to his servants the prophets. What he said and wrote was by divine inspiration; it was *by the word of the Lord*, as St. Paul speaks concerning that which he had purely by revelation, ^{<045>}1 Thessalonians 4:15. Therefore this book was always received among the canonical books of the Old Testament, which is confirmed by what is quoted out of it in the New Testament, ^{<025>}Matthew 2:15; 9:13; 12:7; ^{<025>}Romans 9:25, 26; ^{<020>}1 Peter 2:10. For the word of the Lord endures for ever.

3. Here is a particular account of the times in which he prophesied — *in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel*. We have only this general date of his prophecy; and not the date of any particular part of it, as, before, in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and, afterwards, in Haggai and Zechariah. Here is only one king of Israel named, though there were many more within this time, because, having mentioned the kings of Judah, there was no necessity of naming the other; and, they being all wicked, he took no pleasure in naming them, nor would do them the honour. Now by this account here given of the several reigns in which Hosea prophesied (and it should seem the word of the Lord still came to him, more or less, at times, throughout all these reigns) it appears,

(1.) That he prophesied a long time, that he began when he was very young, which gave him the advantage of strength and sprightliness, and that he continued at his work till he was very old, which gave him the advantage of experience and authority. It was a great honour to him to be thus long employed in such good work, and a great mercy to the people to have a minister so long among them that so well knew their state, and naturally cared for it, one they had been long used to and who therefore was the more likely to be useful to them. And yet, for aught that appears, he did but little good among them; the longer they enjoyed him the less they regarded him; they despised his youth first, and afterwards his age.

(2.) That he passed through a variety of conditions. Some of these kings were very good, and, it is likely, countenanced and encouraged him; others were very bad, who (we may suppose) frowned upon him and discouraged him; and yet he was still the same. God's ministers must expect to pass through *honour and dishonour, evil report and good report*, and must resolve in both to hold fast their integrity and keep close to their work.

(3.) That he began to prophesy at a time when the judgments of God were abroad, when God was himself contending in a more immediate way with that sinful people, who *fell into the hands of the Lord*, before they were turned over *into the hands of man*; for in the days of Uzziah, and of Jeroboam his contemporary, the dreadful earthquake was, mentioned ~~<345>~~Zechariah 14:5 and ~~<300>~~Amos 1:1. And then was the plague of locusts, ~~<200>~~Joel 1:2-4; ~~<300>~~Amos 7:1; ~~<300>~~Hosea 4:3. The rod of God is sent to enforce the word and the word of God is sent to explain the rod, yet neither prevails till God by his Spirit opens the ear to instruction and discipline.

(4.) That he began to prophesy in Israel at a time when their kingdom was in a flourishing prosperous condition, for so it was in the reign of Jeroboam the second, as we find ~~<1245>~~2 Kings 14:25, *He restored the coast of Israel*, and *God saved them by his hand*; yet then Hosea boldly tells them of their sins and foretells their destruction. Men are not to be flattered in their sinful ways because they prosper in the world, but even then must be faithfully reprov'd, and plainly told that their prosperity will not be their security, nor will it last long if they *go on still in their trespasses*.

~~<300>~~HOSEA 1:2-7

THE PROPHET'S MARRIAGE

These words, *The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea*, may refer either,

1. To that glorious set of prophets which was raised up about this time. About this time there lived and prophesied Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah, Obadiah, and Isaiah; but Hosea was the first of them that foretold the destruction of Israel; the *beginning of this word of the Lord was by him*. We read in the history of this Jeroboam here named (~~<1247>~~2 Kings 14:27)

that *the Lord* had *not* yet *said* he would *blot out the name of Israel*, but soon after he said he would, and Hosea was the man that began to say it, which made it so much the harder task to him, to be the first that should carry an unpleasing message and some time before any were raised up to second him. Or, rather,

2. To Hosea's own prophecies. This was the first message God sent him upon to this people, to tell them that they were *an evil and an adulterous generation*. He might have desired to be excused from dealing so roughly with them till he had gained authority and reputation, and some interest in their affections. No; he must *begin with this*, that they might know what to expect from a prophet of the Lord. Nay, he must not only preach this to them, but he must write it, and publish it, and leave it upon record as a witness against them. Now here,

I. The prophet must, as it were in a looking-glass, show them *their sin*, and show it to be exceedingly sinful, exceedingly hateful. The prophet is ordered to *take unto him a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms*, v. 2. And he did so, v. 3. He married a woman of ill fame, *Gomer the daughter of Diblaim*, not one that had been married and had committed adultery, for then she must have been put to death, but one that had lived scandalously in the single state. To marry such a one was not *malum in se* — *evil in itself*, but only *malum per accidens* — *incidentally an evil*, not prudent, decent, or expedient, and therefore forbidden to the priests, and which, if it were really done, would be an affliction to the prophet (it is threatened as a curse on Amaziah that his wife should be a harlot, ^{<AMT>}Amos 7:17), but not a sin when God commanded it for a holy end; nay, if commanded, it was his duty, and he must trust God with his reputation. But most commentators think that it was done *in vision*, or that it is no more than a parable; and that was a way of teaching commonly used among the ancients, particularly prophets; what they meant of others they *transferred to themselves in a figure*, as St. Paul speaks, ^{<406>}1 Corinthians 4:6. He must take *a wife of whoredoms*, and have such children by her as every one would suspect, though born in wedlock, to be *children of whoredoms*, begotten in adultery, because it is too common for those who have lived lewdly in the single state to live no better in the married state. “Now” (saith God) “Hosea, this people is to me such a dishonour, and such a grief and vexation, as a *wife of whoredoms* and *children of whoredoms* would be to thee. *For the land has committed great whoredoms.*” In all instances of wickedness they had departed from the

Lord; but their idolatry especially is the whoredom they are here charged with. Giving that glory to any creature which is due to God alone is such an injury and affront to God as for a wife to embrace the bosom of a stranger is to her husband. It is especially so in those that have made a profession of religion, and have been taken into covenant with God; it is breaking the marriage-bond; it is a heinous odious sin, and, as much as any thing, besots the mind and takes away the heart. *Idolatry is great whoredom*, worse than any other; it is departing from *the Lord*, to whom we lie under greater obligations than any wife does or can do to her husband. *The land has committed whoredom*; it is not here and there a particular person that is guilty of idolatry, but the whole land is polluted with it; the sin has become national, the disease epidemical. What an odious thing would it be for the prophet, a *holy man*, to have a whorish wife, and children whorish like her! What an exercise would it be of his patience, and, if she persisted in it, what could be expected but that he should give her a bill of divorce! And is it not then much more offensive to the *holy God* to have such a people as this to be called by his name and have a place in his house? How great is his patience with them! And how justly may he cast them off! It was as if he should have married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, who probably was at that time a noted harlot. The land of Israel was like Gomer the daughter of Diblaim. *Gomer* signifies *corruption*; *Diblaim* signifies *two cakes*, or *lumps of figs*; this denotes that Israel was near to ruin, and that their luxury and sensuality were the cause of it. They were as the *evil figs* that could not be eaten, they were so evil. It intimates sin to be the daughter of plenty and destruction the daughter of the abuse of plenty. Some give this sense of the command here given to the prophet: “Go, take thee a wife of *whoredoms*, for, if thou shouldst go to seek for an honest modest woman, thou wouldst not find any such, for the whole land, and all the people of it, are given to whoredom, the usual concomitant of idolatry.”

II. The prophet must, as it were through a perspective glass, show them their ruin; and this he does in the names given to the children born of this adulteress; for as *lust*, when it has *conceived*, *brings forth sin*, so *sin*, when it is finished, *brings forth death*.

1. He foretels the fall of the royal family in the name he is appointed to give to his first child, which was a son: *Call his name Jezreel*, v. 4. We find that the prophet Isaiah gave prophetic names to his children (²⁰⁰⁸Isaiah 7:3);, so this prophet here. Jezreel signifies *the seed of God* (so

they should have been); but it signifies also the *scattered of God*; they shall be as sheep on the mountains that have no shepherds. *Call them not Israel*, which signifies *dominion*, they have lost all the honour of that name; but call them Jezreel, which signifies *dispersion*, for those that have departed from the Lord will wander endlessly. Hitherto they have been scattered as seek; let them now be scattered as chaff. Jezreel was the name of one of the royal seats of the kings of Israel; it was a beautiful city, seated in a pleasant valley, and it is with allusion to that city that this child is called *Jezreel*, for *yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*, from whom the present king, Jeroboam, was lineally descended. The house of Jehu smarted for the sins of Jehu, for God often lays up men's iniquity for their children and visits it upon them. It is *the kingdom of the house of Israel*, which may be meant either of the present royal family, that of Jehu, which God did quickly *cause to cease* (for the son of this Jeroboam, Zechariah, reigned but *six months*, and he was the last of Jehu's race), or of the whole kingdom in general, which continued corrupt and wicked, and which was *made to cease* in the reign of Hoshea, about seventy years after; and with God that is but a *little while*. Note, Note, Neither the pomp of kings nor the power of kingdoms can secure them from God's destroying judgments, if they continue to rebel against him.

(2.) What is the ground of this controversy: *I will revenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*, the blood which Jehu shed at Jezreel, when by commission from God and in obedience to his command, he utterly destroyed the house of Ahab, and all that were in alliance with it, with all the worshippers of Baal. God approved of what he did (~~2~~ 2 Kings 10:30): *Thou has done well in executing that which is right in my eyes*; and yet here God will avenge that *blood upon the house of Jehu*, when the time has expired during which it was promised that his family should reign, even to the fourth generation. But how comes the same action to be both rewarded and punished? Very justly; the matter of it was good; it was the execution of a righteous sentence passed upon the house of Ahab, and, as such, it was rewarded; but Jehu did it not in a right manner; he aimed at his own advancement, not at the glory of God, and mingled his own resentments with the execution of God's justice. He did it with a malice against the sinners, but not with any antipathy to the sin; for he kept up the worship of the golden calves, and *took no heed to walk in the law of God*, ~~2~~ 2 Kings 10:31. And therefore when the measure of the iniquity of his

house was full, and God came to reckon with them, the first article in the account is (and, being first, it is put for all the rest) for the blood of the house of Ahab, here called the *blood of Jezreel*. Thus when the house of Baasha was rooted out it was because he did *like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him*, ¹¹⁶1 Kings 16:7. Note, Those that are entrusted with the administration of justice are concerned to see to it that they do it from a right principle and with a right intention, and that they do not themselves live in those sins which they punish in others, lest even their just executions should be reckoned for, another day, as little less than murders.

(3.) How far the controversy shall proceed; it shall be not a correction, but a destruction. Some make those words, *I will visit, or appoint, the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*, to signify, not as we read it the revenging of that bloodshed, but the repeating of that bloodshed: “I will punish the house of Jehu, as I punished the house of Ahab, because Jehu did not take warning by the punishment of his predecessors, but trod in the steps of their idolatry. And after the house of Jehu is destroyed *I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel*; I will begin to bring it down, though now it flourish.” After the death of Zechariah, the last of the house of Jehu, the kingdom of the ten tribes went to decay, and dwindled sensibly. And, in order to the ruin of it, it is threatened (v. 5), *I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel*; the *strength of the warriors of Israel*, so the Chaldee. God will disable them either to defend themselves or to resist their enemies. And the *bow abiding in strength*, and being *renewed in the hand*, intimates a growing power, so the *breaking of the bow* intimates a sinking ruined power. The bow shall be broken *in the valley of Jezreel*, where, probably, the armoury was; or, it may be, in that valley some battle was fought, wherein the kingdom of Israel was very much weakened. Note, There is no fence against God's controversy; when he comes forth against a people their strong bows are soon broken and their strong-holds broken down. In the valley of Jezreel they shed that blood which the righteous God would in that very place avenge upon them; as some notorious malefactors are hanged in chains just where the villainy they suffer for was perpetrated, that the punishment may answer the sin.

2. He foretels God's abandoning the whole nation in the name he gives to the second child. This was a daughter, as the former was a son, to intimate that both sons and daughters had corrupted their way. Some make to

signify that Israel grew effeminate, and was thereby enfeebled and made weak. Call the name of this daughter *Lo-ruhamah* — *not beloved* (so it is translated ^{ROM}Romans 9:25), or *not having obtained mercy*, so it is translated ^{PET}1 Peter 2:10. It comes all to one. This reads the doom of the *house of Israel: I will no more have mercy upon them*. It intimates that God had shown them great mercy, but they had abused his favours, and forfeited them, and now he would show them favour no more. Note, Those that forsake their own mercies for lying vanities have reason to expect that their own mercies should forsake them, and that they should be left to their *lying vanities*, ^{JON}Jonah 2:8. Sin turns away the mercy of God even from *the house of Israel*, his own professing people, whose case is sad indeed when God says that he will no more have mercy upon them. And then it follows, *I will utterly take them away*, will utterly *remove them* (so some), will utterly *pluck them up*, so others. Note, When the streams of mercy are stopped we can expect no other than that the vials of wrath should be opened. Those whom God will no more have mercy upon shall be utterly taken away, as dross and dung. The word for *taking away* sometimes signifies to *forgive* sin; and some take it in that sense here: *I will no more have mercy upon them, though in pardoning I have pardoned them* heretofore. Though God has borne long, he will not bear always, with a people that hate to be reformed. Or, *I will no more have mercy upon them, that I should in any wise pardon them*, or (as our margin reads it) *that I should altogether pardon them*. If pardoning mercy is denied, no other mercy can be expected, for that opens the door to all the rest. Some make this to speak comfort: *I will no more have mercy upon them till in pardoning I shall pardon them*, that is, till the Redeemer comes to Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Chaldee reads it, *But, if they repent, in pardoning I will pardon them*. Even the greatest sinners, if in time they bethink themselves and return, will find that *there is forgiveness with God*.

III. He must show them what mercy God had in store for the house of Judah, at the same time that he was thus contending with the house of Israel (v. 7): *But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah*. Note, Though some are justly cast off for their disobedience, yet God will always secure to himself a remnant that shall be the vessels and monuments of mercy. When divine justice is glorified in some, yet there are others in whom free grace is glorified. And, though some through unbelief are broken off, yet God will have a church in this world till the end of time. It aggravates the

rejection of Israel that God will have mercy on Judah, and not on them, and magnifies God's mercy to Judah that, though they also have done wickedly, yet God did not reject them, as he rejected Israel: *I will have mercy upon them and will save them*. Note, Our salvation is owing purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Now,

1. This, without doubt, refers to the temporal salvations which God wrought for Judah in a distinguishing way, the favours shown to them and not to Israel. When the Assyrian armies had destroyed Samaria, and carried the ten tribes away into captivity, they proceeded to besiege Jerusalem; but God had mercy on the house of Judah, and saved them by the vast slaughter which an angel made, in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians; then they were *saved by the Lord their God* immediately, and not by sword or bow. When the ten tribes were continued in their captivity, and their land was possessed by others, they being *utterly taken away*, God *had mercy on the house of Judah and saved them*, and, after seventy years, brought them back, *not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, ³⁰⁶Zechariah 4:6. *I will save them by the Lord their God*, that is, by myself. God will be exalted *in his own strength*, will take the work into his own hands. That salvation is sure which he undertakes to be the author of; for, if he will work, none shall hinder. And that salvation is most acceptable which he does *by himself*. *So the Lord alone did lead him*. The less there is of man in any salvation, and the more of God, the brighter it shines and the sweeter it tastes. I will save them *in the word of the Lord* (so the Chaldee), for the sake of Christ, the eternal word, and by his power. *I will save them not by bow nor by sword*, that is,

(1.) They shall be saved when they are reduced to so low an ebb that they have neither bow nor sword to defend themselves with, ⁰⁰⁸Judges 5:8; ⁰³²1 Samuel 13:22.

(2.) They shall be saved by the Lord when they are brought off from trusting to their own strength and their weapons of war, ³⁴⁶Psalms 44:6.

(3.) They shall be saved easily, without the trouble of sword and bow, v. 7. ²⁰⁵Isaiah 9:5, *I will save them by the Lord their God*. In the calling him *their God*, he upbraids the ten tribes who had *cast him off* from being *theirs*, for which reason he had *cast them off*, and intimates what was the true reason why he had mercy, distinguishing mercy, for the house of Judah, and saved them: it was in pursuance of his covenant with them as

the Lord their God, and in recompence for their faithful adherence to him and to his word and worship. But,

2. This may refer also to the salvation of Judah from idolatry, which qualified and prepared them for their other salvations. And this is indeed a salvation *by the Lord their God*; it is wrought only by the power of his grace, and can never be wrought by *sword or bow*. Just at the time that the kingdom of Israel was *utterly taken away*, under Hoshea, the kingdom of Judah was gloriously reformed, under Hezekiah, and was therefore preserved; and in Babylon God saved them from their idolatry first, and then from their captivity.

3. Some make this promise to look forward to the great salvation which, in the fulness of time, was to be wrought out *by the Lord our God*, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to *save his people from their sins*.

~~318~~ HOSEA 1:8-11

PROMISES OF MERCY

We have here a prediction,

I. Of the rejection of Israel for a time, which is signified by the name of another child that Hosea had by his adulterous spouse, v. 8, 9. And still we must observe that those children whose names carried these direful omens in them to Israel were all *children of whoredoms* (v. 2), all born of the harlot that Hosea married, to intimate that the ruin of Israel was the natural product of the sin of Israel. If they had not first revolted from God, they would never have been rejected by him; God never leaves any till they first leave him. Here is,

1. The birth of this child: *When she had weaned her daughter, she conceived and bore a son*. Notice is taken of the delay of the birth of this child, which was to carry in its name a certain presage of their utter rejection, to intimate God's patience with them, and his unwillingness to proceed to extremity. Some think that her bearing another son signifies that people's persisting in their wickedness; lust still *conceived and brought forth sin*. They *added to do evil* (so the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it); they were old in adulteries, and obstinate.

2. The name given him: *Call him Lo-ammi — Not my people*. When they were told that God would *no more have mercy on them* they regarded it not, but buoyed up themselves with this conceit, that they were God's people, whom he could not but have mercy on. And therefore he plucks that staff from under them, and disowns all relation to them: *You are not my people, and I will not be your God. "I will not be yours* (so the word it); I will be in no relation to you, will have nothing to do with you; I will not be *your King, your Father, your patron and protector.*" We supply it very well with that which includes all, *"I will not be your God; I will not be to you* what I have been, nor what you vainly expect I should be, nor what I would have been if you had kept close to me." Observe, *"You are not my people;* you do not act as becomes my people; you are not observant of me and obedient to me, as my people should be; you are not my people, but the people of this and the other dunghill-deity; and therefore I will not own you for my people, will not protect you, will not put in any claim to you, not demand you, not deliver you out of the hands of those that have seized you; let them take you; you are none of mine. You will not have me to be your God, but pay your homage to the pretenders, and therefore *I will not be your God;* you shall have no interest in me, shall expect no benefit from me." Note, Our being taken into covenant with God is owing purely to him and to his grace, for then it begins on his side: *I will be to them a God,* and then they shall be *to me a people; we love him because he first loved us.* But our being cast out of covenant is owing purely to ourselves and our own folly. The breach is on man's side: *You are not my people,* and therefore *I will not be your God;* if God *hate any,* it is because they *first hated him.* This was fulfilled in Israel when they were *utterly taken away* into the *land of Assyria,* and their place knew them no more. They were no longer *God's people,* for they lost the knowledge and worship of him; no prophets were sent to them, no promises made to them, as were to the two tribes in their captivity; nay, they were no longer *a people,* but, for aught that appears, were mingled with the nations into which they were carried, and lost among them.

II. Of the reduction and restoration of Israel in the fulness of time. Here, as before, mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath; the rejection, as it shall not be total, so it shall not be final (v. 10, 11): *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea.* See how the same hand that wounded is stretched forth to heal, and how tenderly he that has *torn binds up;* though God *cause grief* by his threatenings, yet *he will have*

compassion, and will gather with everlasting kindness. They are very precious promises which are here made concerning the Israel of God, and which may be of use to us now.

1. Some think that these promises had their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when many of the ten tribes joined themselves to Judah, and took the benefit of the liberty which Cyrus proclaimed, came up in great numbers out of the several countries into which they were dispersed, to their own land, appointed Zerubbabel their head, and coalesced into one people, whereas before they had been two distinct nations. And in their own land, where God had by his prophets disowned and rejected them as none of his, he would by his prophets own them and appear for them as his children; and from all parts of the country they should come up to the temple to worship. And we have reason to think that, though this promise has a further reference, yet it was graciously intended and piously used for the support and comfort of the captives in Babylon, as giving them a general assurance of mercy which God had in store for them and their land; their nation could not be destroyed so long as this blessing was in it, was in reserve for it.

2. Some think that these promises will not have their accomplishment, at least not in full, till the general conversion of the Jews in the latter days, which is expected yet to come, when the vast incredible numbers of Jews, that are now dispersed as the sand of the sea, shall be brought to embrace the faith of Christ and be incorporated in the gospel-church. Then, and not till then, God will own them as his people, his children, even there where they had lain under the dismal tokens of their rejection. The Jewish doctors look upon this promise as not having had its accomplishment yet. But,

3. It is certain that this promise had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it, for to this these words are applied by St. Paul ([Romans 9:25, 26](#)), and by St. Peter when he writes to the Jews of the dispersion, [1 Peter 2:10](#). Israel here is the gospel-church, the spiritual Israel ([Galatians 6:16](#)), all believers who follow the steps, and inherit the blessing of faithful Abraham, who is the father of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, [Romans 4:11, 12](#). Now let us see what is promised concerning this Israel.

(1.) That it shall greatly multiply, and the numbers of it be increased; it shall be *as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered*. Though Israel according to the flesh be diminished and made few, the spiritual Israel shall be numerous, shall be innumerable. In the vast multitudes that by the preaching of the gospel have been brought to Christ, both in the first ages of Christianity and ever since, this promise is fulfilled, thousands out of every tribe in Israel, and out of other nations, *a multitude which no man can number*, ^{<606>}Revelation 7:4, 9; ^{<897>}Galatians 4:27. In this the promise made to Abraham, when God called him Abraham the *high father of a multitude*, had its full accomplishment (^{<1175>}Genesis 17:5), and that ^{<127>}Genesis 22:17. Some observe that they are here compared to the *sand of the sea*, not only for their numbers, but as the sand of the sea serves for a boundary to the waters, that they shall not overflow the earth, so the Israelites indeed are a wall of defence to the places where they live, to keep off judgments. God can do nothing against Sodom while Lot is there.

(2.) That God will renew his covenant with the gospel-Israel, and will incorporate it a church to himself, by as full and ample a charter as that whereby the Old-Testament church was incorporated; nay, and its privileges shall be much greater: “*In the place where it was said unto them, You are not my people*, there shall you be again admitted into covenant, and owned as my people.” The *abandoned Gentiles* in their respective places, and the *rejected Jews* in theirs, shall be favoured and blessed. There, where the fathers were cast off for their unbelief, the children, upon their believing, shall be taken in. This is a blessed resurrection, the making of those the people of God that were *not a people*. Nay, but the privilege is enlarged; now it is not only, *You are my people*, as formerly, but *You are the sons of the living God*, whether by birth you were Jews or Gentiles. Israel under the law was *God's son, his first-born*, but then they were as children *under age*; now, under the gospel, they have grown up both to greater understanding and greater liberty, ^{<891>}Galatians 4:1, 2. Note,

[1.] It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers that they have the living God for their Father, the ever-living God, and may look upon themselves as his children by grace and adoption.

[2.] The sonship of believers shall be owned and acknowledged; it shall be *said to them*, for their comfort and satisfaction, nay, and it shall be said for

their honour in the hearing of the world, *You are the sons of the living God*. Let not the saints disquiet themselves; let not others despise them; for, sooner or later, there shall be a manifestation of the children of God, and all the world shall be made to know their excellency and the value God has for them.

[3.] It will add much to their comfort, very much to their honour, when they are dignified with the tokens of God's favour in that very place where they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This speaks comfort to the believing Gentiles, that they need not go up to Jerusalem, to be received and owned as God's children; no, they may stay where they are, and *in that place*, though it be in the remotest corner of the earth, *in that place* where they were at a distance, where it was said to them, "*You are not God's people,*" but are separated from them (^{236B}Isaiah 56:3, 6), even there, without leaving their country and kindred, they may by faith receive the *Spirit of adoption*, witnessing with their spirits that "*they are the children of God.*"

(3.) That those who had been at variance should be happily brought together (v. 11): *Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together*. This uniting of Judah and Israel, those two kingdoms that were now so much at variance, biting and devouring one another, is mentioned only as a specimen, or one instance, of the happy effect of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, the bringing of those that had been at the greatest enmity one against another to a good understanding one of another and a good affection one to another. This was literally fulfilled when the Galileans, who inhabited that part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, and probably for the most part descended from them, so heartily joined with those that were probably called *Jews* (that were of Judea) in following Christ and embracing his gospel; and his first disciples were partly Jews and partly Galileans. The first that were blessed with the light of the gospel were of the *land of Zebulun and Naphtali* (^{401B}Matthew 4:15); and, though there was no goodwill at all between the Jews and the Galileans, yet, upon their believing in Christ, they were happily consolidated, and there were no remains of the former disaffection they had to one another; nay, when the Samaritans believed, though between them and the Jews there was a much greater enmity, yet in Christ there was a perfect unanimity, (^{408B}Acts 8:14. Thus Judah and Israel were *gathered together*; yet this was but a type of the much more celebrated coalition between Jews and Gentiles, when, by the

death of Christ, the partition-wall of the ceremonial law was taken down. See ^{<404>}Ephesians 2:14-16. Christ died, to *gather together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad*, ^{<415>}John 11:51; ^{<410>}Ephesians 1:10.

(4.) That Jesus Christ should be the centre of unity to all God's spiritual Israel. They shall all agree to *appoint to themselves one head*, which can be no other than he whom God has appointed, even Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the one only head of it, not only a head of government, as of the body politic, but a head of vital influence, as of the natural body. To believe in Christ is to appoint him to ourselves for our head, that is, to consent to God's appointment, and willingly commit ourselves to his guidance and government; and this in concurrence and communion with all good Christians that make him their head; so that, though they are many, yet in him they are one, and so become one with each other. *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt — Those who agree with a third agree with each other.*

(5.) That, having appointed Christ for their head, *they shall come up out of the land*; they shall come, some of all sorts, from all parts, to join themselves to the church, as, under the Jewish economy, they came up from all corners of the land of Israel to Jerusalem, to worship (^{<404>}Psalm 122:4), *Thither the tribes go up*, to which there is a plain allusion in that prophecy of the accession of the Gentiles to the church (^{<211B>}Isaiah 2:3), *Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord*. It denotes not a local remove (for they are said to be in the same place, v. 10), but a change of their mind, a spiritual ascent to Christ. They shall *come up from the earth* (so it may be read); for those who have given up themselves to Christ as their head take their affections off from *this earth*, and the things of it, to set them upon *things above* (^{<501>}Colossians 3:1, 2); for they are not of the world (^{<459>}John 15:19), but have their conversation in heaven. They shall *come up out of the land*, though it be the land of their nativity; they shall, in affection, come out from it, that they may *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*. Thus the learned Dr. Pocock takes it.

(6.) That, when all this comes to pass, *great shall be the day of Jezreel*. Though *great* is *the day of Jezreel's* affliction (so some understand it), yet *great shall be the day of Jezreel's* glory. This shall be Israel's day; the day shall be *their own*, after their enemies have long had their day. Israel is here called *Jezreel*, the *seed of God*, the *holy seed* (^{<211B>}Isaiah 6:13), the

substance of the land. This seed is now sown in the earth, and buried under the clods; but great shall be its day when the harvest comes. Great was the church's day when there were *added to it daily such as should be saved*; then did the Almighty *do great things* for it.