

CHAPTER 8

This chapter, as that before, divides itself into the sins and punishments of Israel; every verse almost declares both, and all to bring them to repentance. When they saw the malignant nature of their sin, in the descriptions of that, they could not but be convinced now much it was their duty to repent of what was so bad in itself; and when they saw the mischievous consequences of their sin, in the predictions of them, they could not but see how much it was their interest to repent for the preventing of them.

I. The sin of Israel is here set forth,

- 1.** In many general expressions (v. 1, 3, 12, 14).
- 2.** In many particular instances; setting up kings without God (v. 4), setting up idols against God (v. 4-6, 11), and courting alliances with the neighbouring nations, (v. 8-10).
- 3.** In this aggravation of it, that they still kept up a profession of religion and relation to God (v. 2, 13, 14).

II. The punishment of Israel is here set forth as answering to the sin. God would bring an enemy upon them (v. 1, 3). All their projects should be blasted (v. 7). Their confidence both in their idols and in their foreign alliances should disappoint them (v. 6, 8, 10). Their strength at home should fail them (v. 14). Their sacrifices should have no reckoning made of them, and their sins should have a reckoning made for them (v. 13).

HOSEA 8:1-7

SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL

The reproofs and threatenings here are introduced with an order to the prophet to *set the trumpet to his mouth* (v. 1), thus to call a solemn assembly, that all might take notice of what he had to deliver and take warning by it. He must sound an alarm, must, in God's name, proclaim war with this rebellious nation. An enemy is coming with speed and fury to seize their land, and he must awaken them to expect it. Thus the prophet must do the part of a watchman, that was by sound of trumpet to call the

besieged to stand to their arms, when he saw the besiegers making their attack, ²³¹⁸Ezekiel 33:3. The prophet must *lift up his voice like a trumpet* (²³⁸¹Isaiah 58:1), and the people must hearken to the sound of the trumpet, ²¹⁶⁷Jeremiah 6:17. Now,

I. Here is a general charge drawn up against them as sinners, as rebels and traitors against their sovereign Lord.

1. They have *transgressed my covenant*, v. 1. They have not only transgressed the command (every sin does that), but they have *transgressed the covenant*; they have been guilty of such sins as break the original contract; they have revolted from their allegiance, and violated the marriage-covenant by their spiritual whoredom; they have, in effect, declared that they will be no longer God's people, nor take him for their God; that is *transgressing the covenant*. They have not only done foolishly, but have dealt deceitfully.

2. They have *trespassed against my law* in many particular instances. God's law is the rule by which we are to walk; and this is the malignity of sin, that it trespasses upon the bounds set us by that law.

3. They have *cast off the thing that is good*. They have *put away and rejected good*, that is, God himself; so some understand it, and very fitly. He is good, and does good, and is our goodness. *There is none good but one, that is God*, the fountain of all good. They have *cast him off*, as not desiring to have any thing more to do with him. God was abandoning them to ruin, and here gives the reason for it. Note, God never casts off any till they first cast him off. Or, as we read it, They have cast off *the thing that is good*; they have cast off the service and worship of God, which is, in effect, *casting God off*. They have cast off that which denominates men good; they have cast off the fear of God, and the regard of man, and all sense of virtue and honesty. Observe, *They have transgressed my covenant*; it has come to this at last; for *they trespassed against my law*. Breaking the command made way for breaking the covenant; and they did that, for they *cast off that which was good*; there it began first. They *left off to be wise and to do good*, and then they went all to naught, ²³⁸³Psalm 36:3. See the method of apostasy; men first cast off that which is good; then those omissions make way for commissions; and frequent actual transgressions of God's law bring men at length to an habitual renunciation of his covenant. When men cast off praying, and hearing, and sabbath-

sanctification, and other things that are good, they are in the high road to a total forsaking of God.

II. Here are general threatenings of wrath and ruin for their sin: *The enemy shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord*, and (v. 3) *shall pursue him*. If by *the house of the Lord* we understand the temple at Jerusalem, by the eagle that comes against it we must suppose to be meant either Sennacherib, who had taken all the fenced cities of Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem (and, no doubt, aimed at the house of the Lord, to lay that waste, as he had done the temples of the gods of other nations), or Nebuchadnezzar, who burnt the temple and made a prey of the vessels of the temple. But, if we make it to point at the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, we must reckon it is the body of that people which as Israelites, to whom *pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants*, is here called the *house of the Lord*. They thought their being so would be their protection; but the prophet is directed to tell them that now they had lost the life and spirit of their religion, though they still retained the name and form of it, they were but as a carcase to which the eagles and other birds of prey should be gathered together. The enemy shall pursue them *as an eagle*, so swiftly, so strongly, so furiously. Note, Those who break their covenant of friendship with God expose themselves to the enmity of all about them, to whom they make themselves a cheap and easy prey; and their having been *the house of the Lord*, and his living temples, will be no excuse nor refuge to them. See ³⁰⁰Amos 3:2.

III. Here is the people's hypocritical claim of relation to God, when they were in trouble and distress (v. 2): *Israel shall cry unto me*; when either they are threatened with these judgments, and would plead an exemption, or when the judgments are inflicted on them and they apply to God for relief, *pouring out a prayer when God's chastening is upon them*, they will plead that among them *God is known* and his *name is great* (³⁰¹Psalm 76:1) and in their distress will pretend to that knowledge of God's ways which in their prosperity they *desired not*, but *despised*. They will then cry unto God, will call him their God, and (as impudent beggars) will tell him they are well acquainted with him, and have known him long. Note, There are many who in works deny God, and disown him, yet, to serve a turn, will profess that they *know him*, that they know more of him than some of their neighbours do. But what stead will it stand a man in to be able to say,

My God, I know thee, when he cannot say, “My God, I love thee,” and “My God, I serve thee, and cleave to thee only?”

IV. Here is the prophet's expostulation with them, in God's name (v. 5): *How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?* It is not meant of absolute innocency (that is what the guilty can never attain to); but how long will it be ere they repent and reform, ere they become innocent in this matter, and free from the sin of idolatry? They are wedded to their idols; how long will it be ere they are weaned from them, ere *they are able to get clear of them?* so it might be rendered. This intimates that custom in sin makes it very difficult for men to part with it. It is hard to cleanse from that filthiness, either of flesh or spirit, which has been long wallowed in. But God speaks as if he thought the time long till sinners cast away their iniquities and come to live a new life. He complains of their obstinacy; it is that which keeps his anger against them burning, which would soon be turned away if they did but *attain to innocency* from those sins that kindled it. They in trouble cry, *How long* will it be ere God return to us in a way of mercy? but they do not hear him ask, *How long* will it be ere they return to God in a way of duty?

V. Here are some particular sins which they are charged with, are convicted of the folly of, and warned of the fatal consequences of, and for which God's *anger is kindled against them*.

1. In their civil affairs. They *set up kings without God*, and in contempt of him, v. 4. So they did when they rejected Samuel, in whom the Lord was their king, and chose Saul, that they might be *like the nations*. So they did when they revolted from their allegiance to the house of David, and set up Jeroboam, wherein, though they fulfilled God's secret counsel, yet they aimed not at his glory, nor consulted his oracle, nor applied to him by prayer for direction, nor had any regard to his providence, but were led by their own humour and hurried on by the impetus of their own passions. So they did now about the time when Hosea prophesied, when it seems to have grown fashionable to *set up kings*, and depose them again, according as the contenders for the crown could make an interest, ^{<23>}2 Kings 15:8, etc. Note, We cannot expect comfort and success in our affairs when we go about them, and go on in them, without consulting God and acknowledge not him in all our ways: “They *set up kings*, and *I knew it not*, that is, I did not know it from them, they did not ask *counsel at my mouth*, whether they might lawfully do it or whether it would be best for

them to do it, though they had prophets and oracles with whom they might have advised.” They *looked not to the Holy One of Israel*, ^{<2301>}Isaiah 31:1. Nor did the princes do as Jephthah, who, before he took upon him the government, *uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh*, ^{<0711>}Judges 11:11. Note, Those that are entrusted with public concerns, and particularly with the election and nomination of magistrates, ought to take God along with them therein, by desiring his direction and designing his honour.

2. In their religious matters they did much worse; for they *set up calves against God*, in competition with him and contradiction to him. “Of *their silver and their gold* which God gave them, and multiplied to them, that they might serve and honour him with them, they have *made them idols*.” They called them *gods* (^{<1123>}1 Kings 12:28, *Behold thy gods, O Israel!*) but God calls them *idols*; the word signifies *griefs*, or *troubles*, because they are offensive to God and will be ruining to those that worship them. *Their silver and their gold they have made to them idols*; so the words are, referring primarily to the images of their gods, which they made of gold and silver, especially the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Idolaters spare no cost in worshipping their idols. But they are very applicable to the spiritual idolatry of the covetous: *Their silver and their gold* are the gods they place their happiness in, set their hearts upon, to which they pay their homage, and in which they put their confidence. Now, to show them the folly of their idolatry, he tells them,

(1.) Whence their gods came. Trace them to their original, and they will be found the creatures of their own fancies and the work of their own hands, v. 6. The calf they worshipped is here called *the calf of Samaria*, because it is probable that when Samaria, in Ahab's time, became the metropolis of the kingdom, a calf was set up there to be near the court, besides those at Dan and Bethel, or perhaps one of those was removed thither; for those that are for new gods will still be for newer. Now let them consider what this god of theirs owed its rise and being to.

[1.] To their own invention and institution: *From Israel was it also*, not from the God of Israel (he expressly forbade it), but from Israel; it was a device of their own (some think), not borrowed from any of their neighbours, no, not from the Egyptians, for, though they worshipped Apis in a living cow, they never worshipped a *golden calf*; that was from Israel; it was *their own iniquity*. Now could that be worthy of their worship

which was a contrivance of their own? It was *from Israel*, that is, the gold and silver of which it was made were collected from the people of Israel by a brief: it was a poor god that was framed by contribution.

[2.] It was owing to the skill and labour of the craftsman, ^{<6275>}Deuteronomy 27:15. *The workmen made it, therefore it is not God*, v. 6. This is a very cogent conclusive argument, and the inference so very plain that one would think their own thoughts should have suggested it to them, so as to make them ashamed of their idolatry. What can be more absurd than for men to worship that as a god, giving being and good to them, which they themselves gave being to (both matter and form), but could not give life to? A made god is no God. This is a self-evident truth; and yet St. Paul was accused as a criminal for preaching that *those are no gods which are made with hands*, ^{<4426>}Acts 19:26. And, here, this which should have turned them from their idols comes in as a reason why they were inseparably wedded to them; therefore they could not attain to innocency because it was *from themselves*; they were willing to have gods of their own to do what they pleased with, that they themselves might do what they pleased.

(2.) What their gods would come to. If they are not gods, they will not last; nay, if they pretend to be gods, they will be reckoned with: *The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces*, and those that would not yield to the force of the former argument shall be convinced by this that it is not God, but an *unprofitable idol*, as the Chaldee calls it. It shall be *broken to shivers*, like a potter's vessel, though it be a golden calf. It shall be *chips or saw-dust*; it shall be a *spider's web*; so St. Jerome. It seems to allude to Moses's grinding to powder the golden calf that was in his time. This shall be served as that was. Sennacherib boasted what he had done to *Samaria and her idols*, ^{<2311>}Isaiah 10:11. Note, Deifying any creature makes way for the destruction of it. If they had made vessels and ornaments for themselves of their silver and gold, they might have remained; but, if they make gods of them, they shall be *broken to pieces*.

(3.) What their gods would bring them to. The breaking of them to pieces would be a disappointment to those who trusted in them. But that was not all: *They have made to themselves idols, that they may be cut off* (v. 4), that their gold and silver, which they so abused, may be cut off (so some take it), nay, that they may themselves be cut off from God, from their own land, from the land of the living. Their idolatry will as certainly end in their extirpation as if they had purposely designed it. And, when this

proves to be the effect of their sin, what relief will they have from the gods wherein they trusted? None at all: “*Thy calf, O Samaria! has cast thee off; it cannot give thee any help in thy distress, and the pleasure thou now takest in it will vanish, and be no pleasure to thee.*” Those that were justly sent to the gods whom they had chosen found them *miserable comforters*, ^{<014>}Judges 10:14. If men will not quit the love and service of sin, yet they shall certainly lose all the delights and profits of it. If Samaria had continued firm and faithful to the God of Israel, he would have been a present powerful help to her; but the calf she preferred before him was a broken reed. The case will be the same with those that make their silver and their gold their god. It will *cast them off*, and not *profit them in the day of wrath*, ^{<012>}Ezekiel 7:12. Note, Those that suffer themselves to be deceived into any idolatries will certainly find themselves deceived in them. Cardinal Wolsey owned that if he had served his God as faithfully as he had served his prince he would not have *cast him off*, as his prince did, in his old age. Their disappointment in their idols is illustrated (v. 7) by a similitude which intimates both that and the destruction which God brought upon them for their idolatry.

[1.] They got no good to themselves by worshipping idols: *They have sown the wind*. They have put themselves to a great deal of trouble and expense to make and worship their idols, have made a business of it as much as the husbandman does of sowing his corn, in expectation of reaping some mighty advantage from it, and that they should be as prosperous and victorious as the neighbouring nations were, that worshipped idols. But it is all a cheat; it is like *sowing the wind*, which can yield no increase; they *labour in vain, labour for the wind*, ^{<156>}Ecclesiastes 5:16. They take great pains to no purpose, and *weary themselves for very vanity*, ^{<013>}Habakkuk 2:13. Those that make an idol of this world do so; they *set their eyes on that which is not*, which, like the wind, makes a great noise, but has nothing substantial in it.

[2.] They brought ruin upon themselves by it: They shall *reap the whirlwind, a great whirlwind* (so the word signifies), which shall hurry them away and dash them to pieces. They not only have not their false gods for them but they set the true God against them; their favour will stand them in no more stead than the wind, but his wrath will do them more mischief than a whirlwind. As a man sows, so shall he reap. “If it may be supposed that a man should sow the wind, and cover it with earth, or keep it there for a while penned up, what could he expect but that it

should be forced by its being shut up, and the accession of what might increase its strength, to break forth again in greater quantities with greater violence?" So Dr. Pocock. They promise themselves plenty, peace, and victory, by worshipping idols, but their expectations come to nothing. What they sow never comes up; it has *no stalk*, no blade, or, if it have, *the bud shall yield no meal*; it shall be as the thin ears in Pharaoh's dream, that were blasted with the *east wind*, and there was nothing in them. Or *if it yield*, if they do prosper for a while in their idolatrous courses, *the strangers shall swallow it up*; it shall be so far from doing them any service that it shall be but as a bait to invite strangers to invade them, and as a spoil to enrich those strangers and enable them to do so much the more mischief. Note, The service of idols is an unprofitable service, and the works of darkness are unfruitful; nay, in the end they will be pernicious. ^{<17>}Romans 6:21, *The end of those things is death*. Those that *sow iniquity reap vanity*: nay, those that *sow to the flesh, reap corruption*. The hopes of sinners will be cheats, and their gains will be snares.

~~<28>~~ HOSEA 8:8-14

THE CRIMES OF THE PEOPLE

It was the honour and happiness of Israel that they had but one God to trust to and he all-sufficient in every strait, and but one God to serve, and he well worthy of all their devotions. But it was their sin, and folly, and shame, that they knew not when they were well off, that they forsook their own mercies for lying vanities; for,

I. They multiplied their alliances (v. 9): *They have hired lovers*, or (as the margin reads it) *they have hired loves*. They were at great expense to purchase the friendship of the nations about them, that otherwise had no value nor affection at all for them, nor cared for having any thing to do with them but only upon the Shechemites' principles — *Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours?* ^{<12>}Genesis 34:23. Had Israel maintained the honour of their peculiarity, the surrounding nations would have continued to admire them *as a wise and understanding people*; but, when they profaned their own crown, their neighbours despised them, and they had no interest in them further than they paid dearly for it. But those

surely have behaved ill among their neighbours who have no loves, no lovers, but what they hire. See here,

1. The contempt that Israel lay under among the nations (v. 8): *Israel is swallowed up*, devoured by strangers, their land eaten up (v. 7), and themselves too, and, being impoverished, they have quite lost their credit and reputation, like a merchant that has become a bankrupt, so that they are *among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure*, a vessel of dishonour (³¹²⁰2 Timothy 2:20), a *despised broken vessel*, ²⁴²⁸Jeremiah 22:28. None of their neighbours have any value for them, nor care to have any thing to do with them. Note, Those that have professed religion, if they degenerate and grow profane, are of all men the most contemptible. *If the salt have lost its savour*, it is fit for nothing but to be *trodden under foot of men*. Or it denotes their dispersion and captivity *among the Gentiles*; they shall be among them poor and prisoners; and who has pleasure in such? 2. The court that Israel made to the nations notwithstanding (v. 9): They have *gone to Assyria*, to engage the king of Assyria to help them; and herein they are as a *wild ass alone by himself*, foolish, headstrong, and unruly; they will have their way, and nothing shall *hold them in*, no, not the bridle of God's laws, nothing shall *turn them back*, no, not the sword of God's wrath. They take a course by themselves, and the effect will be that, like a *wild ass by himself*, they will be the easier and surer prey to the lion. See ³⁸¹²Job 11:12; ²⁴²⁴Jeremiah 2:24. Note, Man is in nothing more like the wild ass's colt than in seeking for that succour and that satisfaction in the creature which are to be had in God only.

3. The crosses that they were likely to meet with in their alliances with the neighbouring nations (v. 10): *Though they have hired among the nations*, and hoped thereby to prevent their own ruin, yet *now will I gather them*, as *the sheaves in the floor* (³⁰⁴²Micah 4:12); so that what they provided for their own safety shall but make them the easier prey to their enemies. Note, There is no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission; nay, that which men hire for their own preservation often contributes to their own destruction. See ²³⁷⁰Isaiah 7:20. The king of Assyria, whose friendship they courted, called himself a *king of princes*, ²³⁰⁸Isaiah 10:8. *Are not my princes altogether kings?* He laid *burdens* upon Israel, levied taxes upon them, ¹²⁵⁹2 Kings 15:19, 20. And for these *they shall sorrow a little*; this shall be but a little burden to them in comparison of what they may further expect; or they will be but little sensible of this grievance, will not lay it to heart, and therefore may expect heavier

judgments. *They have begun to be diminished* (so some read it), *by the burden of the king of princes*; but this is only the *beginning of sorrows* (⁴²⁴⁸Matthew 24:8), *the beginning of revenges*, ⁴⁵²⁰Deuteronomy 32:42. Note, God often comes gradually with his judgments upon a provoking people, that he may show how slow he is to wrath, and may awaken them to repentance; but those that are made to *sorrow a little*, if they are not thereby brought to sorrow after a godly sort, will, another day, be made to sorrow a great deal, to sorrow everlastingly.

II. They multiplied their altars and temples. Observe,

1. How they denied *the power of godliness*, and wholly cast that off (v. 12): *I have written to him the great things of my law*; this intimates the privilege they enjoyed, as having God's statutes and judgments made known to them, and being entrusted with the lively oracles. Note,

(1.) The things of God's law are *magnalia Dei* — *the great things of God*. They are things that proclaim the greatness of the Law-maker, and things of great use and great importance to us; they are our life, and our eternal welfare depends upon our observance of them and obedience to them; they will make us great if we make a right use of them; and they are things which God will magnify and make honourable.

(2.) It is a great privilege to have the things of God's law written; thus they are reduced to a greater certainty, spread the further, and last the longer, with much less danger of being embezzled and corrupted than if they were transmitted by word of mouth only.

(3.) The things of God's law are of his own writing; for Moses and the prophets were his amanuenses, and holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

(4.) It is the advantage of those that are members of the visible church that these great things are written *to them*, are intended for their direction, and so they must receive them; what things were written in former ages *were written for our learning*, and are profitable for us. And, if those were happy who had the *great things of God's law* written to them, how much happier are we who have the gospel written to us! But see how this privilege was slighted; these great things of the law were *counted as a strange thing*, as unintelligible and unreasonable (which might *therefore* be slighted, because not to be fathomed, not to be accounted for), or as

foreign, and things of no concernment to them, things that they had nothing to do with nor were to be governed by; they used those things as strangers, which they were shy of, and knew not how to bid welcome. *We desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Note,

[1.] God having written to us the great things of his law, we ought to make them familiar to us, as our nearest relations (^{300B}Proverbs 7:3, 4); for *therefore* we have them written, that they may *talk with us*, ^{302B}Proverbs 6:22.

[2.] We make nothing of the things of God's law if we make strange of them, as if they did not affect us and therefore we need not be affected with them.

2. How they kept up the form of godliness notwithstanding, and to what little purpose they did so.

(1.) They multiplied their altars (v. 11): *Ephraim made many altars to sin.* God appointed that there should be but one altar for sacrifice (^{302B}Deuteronomy 12:3, 5); but the ten tribes, having forsaken that, would still be thought very devout, and zealous for the honour of God, and, as if they would make amends for the affront they put on God's altar, they made *many altars*, dedicated to the God of Israel, whom hereby they intended, or at least pretended, to give glory to; but that would not justify their violation of God's express command, nor would the example of the patriarchs, who before the law of Moses had many altars. No, they *made many altars to sin* (that is, they did that which turned into sin to them), and therefore these *altars shall be unto them to sin*, that is, God will charge it upon them as a heinous sin, and put that upon the score of their crimes which they designed to be for the expiation of their crimes. Or they shall be to them an occasion of further sin. Their multiplying of altars dedicated to the God of Israel would introduce altars dedicated to other gods. Note, It is a great sin to corrupt the worship of God, and it will be charged as sin upon those that do it, how plausible soever their pretensions may be. And the way of this, as other sins, is down-hill; those that once deviate from the fixed rule of God's commands will wander endlessly.

(2.) They multiplied their sacrifices, v. 13. Their altars were smoking altars: They *sacrificed flesh for the sacrifices of God's offerings*, and they celebrated their feasts upon their sacrifices; they were at a great expense upon their devotions, and (as those commonly are who set up their own

inventions in the room of divine institutions) were very zealous in their way; as if they hoped by their impositions on themselves to atone for the contempt of the great atonement, and by their observing a ceremonial law of their own to excuse themselves from the obligation of all God's moral precepts. But how did they speed?

[1.] God makes no reckoning of their services: *The Lord accepts them not.* How should he, when they did not offer their sacrifice upon that altar which alone *sanctified the gift*, and when they only sacrificed flesh, but not the spiritual sacrifice of a penitent believing heart? Note, Those services only are acceptable to God which are performed according to the rule of his word, and *through Jesus Christ*, ^{<005>}1 Peter 2:5.

[2.] He takes that occasion to reckon with them for their sins; now will he, instead of pardoning their iniquity and blotting out their sins, as they expected, *remember their iniquity and visit their sins.* Such an *abomination to the Lord* are the *sacrifices of the wicked* that they provoke him to call them to an account for all their other abominations. When they think by their sacrifices to bribe the Judge of heaven and earth into a connivance at their wickedness he will resent that as the highest affront they can put upon him, and it shall be the measure-filling sin. Note, A petition for leave to sin amounts to an imprecation of the curse for sin, and so it shall be answered, *according to the multitude of the idols.* "I will punish their sins, *for they shall return to Egypt;*" they shall be carried captive into Assyria, which shall be to them a house of bondage, as Egypt was to their fathers. Or it refers to ^{<038>}Deuteronomy 28:68, where returning to Egypt is made to close and complete the miseries of that sinful nation.

(3.) They multiplied their temples, and these also in honour of the true God, as they pretended, but really in contempt of the choice he had made of Jerusalem to *put his name there.* *Israel has forgotten his Maker*, v. 14. They pretended to know him, and yet forgot him, for they *liked not to retain God in their knowledge*, when the remembrance of him would give check to their lusts. It was an aggravation of their sin in forgetting God that he was *their Maker* (^{<055>}Deuteronomy 32:15, 18; ^{<850>}Job 35:10), as nothing obliges us more to remember him than that he is *our Creator*, ^{<211>}Ecclesiastes 12:1. "He has *forgotten his Maker, and builds temples;* he seems by the temples he builds to me mindful of his Maker, and to be desirous still to keep him in mind, and yet really he has forgotten him, because he has cast off the fear of him." Some by temples here understand

palaces, for so the word sometimes signifies. “*He has forgotten his Maker*, and yet is so secure and haughty that he sets his judgments at defiance, as Nebuchadnezzar did when he said, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?*” Judah is likewise charged with *multiplying fenced cities*, and trusting in them for safety, when the judgments of God were abroad. To fortify their cities in subjection and subordination to God was well enough; but to fortify them in opposition to God, and without any regard to him or his providence (~~2321~~ Isaiah 22:11), shows their hearts to be desperately *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. But *none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered*, nor shall they. *God will send a fire upon his cities*, upon the cities both of Judah and Israel, not only the head-cities of Jerusalem and Samaria, but all the other cities of those two kingdoms, and it shall devour not only the cottages, but *the palaces thereof*; though ever so strong, the fire shall master them; though ever so stately and sumptuous, the fire shall not spare them. This was fulfilled when all the cities of Israel were laid in ashes by the king of Assyria, and all the cities of Judah by the king of Babylon. The fires they both kindled were of his sending; and when he judges he will overcome.