

CHAPTER 7

This chapter is an occasional sermon, in which the prophet sings both of mercy and judgment to those that did not perceive or understand either; he piped unto them, but they danced not, mourned unto them, but they wept not. Here is,

- I.** The consternation that Ahaz was in upon an attempt of the confederate forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem (v. 1, 2).
- II.** The assurance which God, by the prophet, sent him for his encouragement, that the attempt should be defeated and Jerusalem should be preserved (v. 3-9).
- III.** The confirmation of this by a sign which God gave to Ahaz, when he refused to ask one, referring to Christ, and our redemption by him (v. 10-16).
- IV.** A threatening of the great desolation that God would bring upon Ahaz and his kingdom by the Assyrians, notwithstanding their escape from this present storm, because they went on still in their wickedness (v. 17-25). And this is written both for our comfort and for our admonition.

ISAIAH 7:1-9

COMFORT ADMINISTERED TO AHAZ

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died, ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 6:1. Jotham his son reigned, and reigned well, sixteen years. All that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this, which is put first, was in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham. Many excellent useful sermons he preached which were not published and left upon record; for, if all that was memorable had been written, *the world could not have contained the books*, ⁴⁰²⁵John 21:25. Perhaps in the reign of Ahaz, a wicked king, he had not opportunity to preach so much at court as in Jotham's time, and therefore then he wrote the more, for a testimony against them. Here is,

I. A very formidable design laid against Jerusalem by Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel, two neighbouring potentates, who had of late made descents upon Judah severally. At the end of the reign of Jotham, *the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin and Pekah,* ^(2Kings) 2 Kings 15:37. But now, in the second or third year of the reign of Ahaz, encouraged by their former successes, they entered into an alliance against Judah. Because Ahaz, though he found the sword over his head, began his reign with idolatry, *God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria and of the king of Israel* (^(2Chron) 2 Chronicles 28:5), and a great slaughter they made in his kingdom, v. 6, 7. Flushed with this victory, they went up towards Jerusalem, the royal city, to war against it, to besiege it, and make themselves masters of it; but it proved in the issue that they could not gain their point. Note, The sin of a land brings foreign invasions upon it and betrays the most advantageous posts and passes to the enemy; and God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment, ordinarily, begins at the house of God.

II. The great distress that Ahaz and his court were in when they received advice of this design: *It was told the house of David* that Syria and Ephraim had signed a league against Judah, v. 2. This degenerate royal family is called the *house of David*, to put us in mind of that article of God's covenant with David (^(Psalm) Psalm 89:30-33), *If his children forsake my law, I will chasten their transgression with the rod; but my loving-kindness will I not utterly take away*, which is remarkably fulfilled in this chapter. News being brought that the two armies of Syria and Israel were joined, and had taken the field, the court, the city, and the country, were thrown into consternation; *The heart of Ahaz was moved with fear*, and then no wonder that *the heart of his people was so, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*. They were tossed and shaken, and put into a great disorder and confusion, were wavering and uncertain in their counsels, hurried hither and thither, and could not fix in any steady resolution. They yielded to the storm, and gave up all for gone, concluding it in vain to make any resistance. Now that which caused this fright was the sense of guilt and the weakness of their faith. They had made God their enemy, and knew not how to make him their friend, and therefore their fears tyrannised over them; while those whose consciences are kept *void of offence, and whose hearts are fixed, trusting in God, need not be afraid of evil tidings; though the earth be removed, yet will not they fear; but the wicked flee at the shaking of a leaf,* ^(Leviticus) Leviticus 26:36.

III. The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake (he deserved to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief), but because he was a son of David and king of Judah. God had kindness for him for his father's sake, who must not be forgotten, and for his people's sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe,

1. God appointed the prophet to meet Ahaz, though he did not send to the prophet to speak with him, nor desire him to enquire of the Lord for him (v. 3): *Go to meet Ahaz*. Note, God is often found of those who seek him not, much more will he be found of those who seek him diligently. He speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as enquire after it.

3. He ordered him to take his little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name, *Shear-jashub* — *A remnant shall return*. The prophets sometimes recorded what they preached in the significant names of their children (as ^{<2104>}Hosea 1:4, 6, 9); therefore Isaiah's children are said to be *for signs*, ^{<2188>}Isaiah 8:18. This son was so called for the encouragement of those of God's people who were carried captive, assuring them that they should return, at least a remnant of them, which was more than they could pretend to merit; yet at this time God was better than his word; for he took care not only that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, ^{<485>}2 Chronicles 28:15.

3. He directed him where he should find Ahaz. He was to meet with him not in the temple, or the synagogue, or royal chapel, but *at the end of the conduit of the upper pool*, where he was, probably with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the water-works, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefits of them (^{<229>}Isaiah 22:9-11; ^{<481>}2 Chronicles 32:3, 4), or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying of the city as well as they could; and perhaps finding every thing in a bad posture or defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore, *Go, meet him there*. Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably, and, what time they are most afraid, encourages them to trust in him.

4. He put words in his mouth, else the prophet would not have known how to bring a message of good to such a bad man, a sinner in Zion, that ought to be afraid; but God intended it for the support of faithful Israelites.

(1.) The prophet must rebuke their fears, and advise them by no means to yield to them, but keep their temper, and preserve the possession of their own souls (v. 4): *Take heed, and be quiet*. Note, In order to comfort there is need of caution; that we may be quiet, it is necessary that we take heed and watch against those things that threaten to disquiet us. “Fear not with this amazement, this fear, that weakens, and has torment; neither *let thy heart be tender*, so as to melt and fail within thee; but pluck up thy spirits, have a good heart on it, and be courageous; let not fear betray the succours which reason and religion offer for thy support.” Note, Those who expect God should help them must help themselves, ^{<3274>}Psalm 27:14.

(2.) He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incogitancy (nothing more dangerous than so to despise an enemy), but in faith and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful politic princes, for either of whom he was an unequal match, but, if united, he durst not look them in the face, nor make head against them. “No,” says the prophet, “they are *two tails of smoking firebrands*; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as fireballs; and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire put together burn the more violently. But they are only smoking firebrands: and where there is smoke there is some fire, but it may be not so much as was feared. Their threatenings will vanish into smoke. *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise* (^{<2447>}Jeremiah 46:17), and Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; and such are all the enemies of God's church, *smoking flax*, that will soon be quenched. Nay, they are but *tails* of smoking firebrands, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent; they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger; you may put your foot on them, and tread them out.” The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were now near expiring. Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming fire the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are ever so furious, nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

(3.) He must assure them that the present design of these high allies (so they thought themselves) against Jerusalem should certainly be defeated and come to nothing, v. 5-7.

[1.] That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable is made the ground of their defeat — and that was the depth of their designs and the height of their hopes: “*Therefore they shall be baffled and sent back with shame, because they have taken evil counsel against thee*, which is an offence to God. These firebrands are a *smoke in his nose* (^{<285>}Isaiah 65:5), and therefore must be extinguished.” *First*, They are very spiteful and malicious, and, therefore they shall not prosper. Judah had done them no wrong; they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but, without any reason, they said, *Let us go up against Judah, and vex it*. Note, Those that are vexatious cannot expect to be prosperous, those that love to do mischief cannot expect to do well. *Secondly*, They are very secure, and confident of success. They will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all: they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem wide enough for them to march their army in at; or they count upon dissecting or dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the king of Israel, the other for the king of Syria, who had agreed in one viceroy — *a king to be set in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal*, some obscure person, it is uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite. So sure were they of gaining their point that they divided the prey before they had caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful are commonly least successful, for surely God scorns the scorers.

[2.] God himself gives them his word that the attempt should not take effect (v. 7): “*Thus saith the Lord God, the sovereign Lord of all, who brings the counsel of the heathen to naught* (^{<280>}Psalm 33:10), *It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass; their measures shall all be broken, and they shall not be able to bring to pass their enterprise.*” Note, Whatever stands against God, or thinks to stand without him, cannot stand long. Man purposes, but God disposes; and *who is he that saith and it cometh to pass if the Lord commands it not or countermands it?* (^{<287>}Lamentations 3:37. See ^{<192>}Proverbs 19:21.

(4.) He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies, at last, that were now such a terror to them.

[1.] They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, nor push their conquests any further; *The head city of Syria is Damascus, and the head man of Damascus is Rezin*; this he glories in, and this let him be content with, v. 8. *The head city of Ephraim has long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah*. These shall be made to

know their own, their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them, to make themselves masters of the cities of Judah, much less to make Jerusalem their prey. Note, As God has appointed men the bounds of their habitation (^{<417>}Acts 17:26), so he has appointed princes the bounds of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbours' rights.

[2.] Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rooted out, and should be so far from seizing other people's lands that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to compute the sixty-five years within which *Ephraim shall cease to be a people*; for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this: and some make it a mistake of the transcriber, and think it should be read *within six and five years*, just eleven. But it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes; and some late interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last desolation of that country by Esarhaddon, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken that it was no more a people. Now it was the greatest folly in the world for those to be ruining their neighbours who were themselves marked for ruin, and so near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were triumphing over Judah, ^{<480>}2 Chronicles 28:10. *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?*

(5.) He must urge them to mix faith with those assurances which he had given them (v. 9): “*If you will not believe what is said to you, surely you shall not be established*; your shaken and disordered state shall not be established, your unquiet unsettled spirit shall not; though the things told you are very encouraging, yet they will not be so to you, unless you believe them, and be willing to take God's word.” Note, The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the quieting and composing of the mind in the midst of all the tosses of this present time, ^{<440>}2 Chronicles 20:20.

^{<200>}ISAIAH 7:10-16

THE PROMISE OF IMMANUEL

Here,

I. God, by the prophet, makes a gracious offer to Ahaz, to confirm the foregoing predictions, and his faith in them, by such sign or miracle as he should choose (v. 10, 11): *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God*; See here the divine faithfulness and veracity. God tells us nothing but what he is able and ready to prove. See his wonderful condescension to the children of men, in that he is so *willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel*, ^{<3067>}Hebrews 6:17. He considers our frame, and that, living in a world of sense, we are apt to require sensible proofs, which therefore he has favoured us with in sacramental signs and seals. Ahaz was a bad man, yet God is called the Lord his God, because he was a child of Abraham and David, and of the covenants made with them. See how gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful; Ahaz is bidden to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece (^{<3065>}Judges 6:37); let him ask for a sign in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in all.

II. Ahaz rudely refuses this gracious offer, and (which is not mannerly towards any superior) kicks at the courtesy, and puts a slight upon it (v. 12): *I will not ask*. The true reason why he would not ask for a sign was because, having a dependence upon the Assyrians, their forces, and their gods, for help, he would not thus far be beholden to the God of Israel, or lay himself under obligations to him. He would not ask a sign for the confirming of his faith because he resolved to persist in his unbelief, and would indulge his doubts and distrusts; yet he pretends a pious reason: *I will not tempt the Lord*; as if it would be a tempting of God to do that which God himself invited and directed him to do. Note, A secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to him; and those who are resolved that they will not trust God yet pretend that they will not tempt him.

III. The prophet reproves him and his court, him and the house of David, the whole royal family, for their contempt of prophecy, and the little value they had for divine revelation (v. 13) *“Is it a small thing for you to weary men by your oppression and tyranny, with which you make yourselves burdensome and odious to all mankind? But will you weary my God also with the affronts you put upon him?”* As the unjust judge that neither *feared God nor regarded man*, ^{<3062>}Luke 18:2. *You have wearied the Lord with your words*, ^{<3067>}Malachi 2:17. Nothing is more grievous to the God of heaven than to be distrusted. *“Will you weary my God? Will you suppose him to be tired and unable to help you, or to be weary of doing you good?”*

Whereas *the youths may faint and be weary*, you may have tired all your friends, *the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary.*” ^{240B}Isaiah 40:28-31. Or this: “In affronting the prophets, you think you put a slight only upon men like yourselves, and consider not that you affront God himself, whose messengers they are, and put a slight upon him, who will resent it accordingly.” The prophet here calls God his God with a great deal of pleasure: Ahaz would not say, He is my God, though the prophet had invited him to say so (v. 11): *The Lord thy God*; but Isaiah will say, “He is mine.” Note, Whatever others do, we must avouch the Lord for ours and abide by him.

IV. The prophet, in God's name, gives them a sign: “You will not ask a sign, but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect: *The Lord himself shall give you a sign* (v. 14), a double sign.”

1. “A sign in general of his good-will to Israel and to the house of David. You may conclude it that he has mercy in store for you, and that you are not forsaken of your God, how great soever your present distress and danger are; for of your nation, of your family, the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that blessing is in you, which shall be introduced,”

(1.) “In a glorious manner; for, whereas you have been often told that he should be born among you, I am now further to tell you that he shall be born of a virgin, which will signify both the divine power and the divine purity with which he shall be brought into the world, — that he shall be a extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation, — and that he shall be a holy thing, not stained with the common pollutions of the human nature, therefore incontestably fit to have the throne of his father David given him.” Now this, though it was to be accomplished above 500 years after, was a most encouraging sign to the house of David (and to them, under that title, this prophecy is directed, v. 13) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed envy Judah (^{241B}Isaiah 11:13) and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail; for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, ^{149D}Genesis 49:10. Those whom God designs for the great salvation may take that for a sign to them that they shall not be swallowed up by any trouble they meet with in the way.

(2.) The Messiah shall be introduced on a glorious errand, wrapped up in his glorious name: They *shall call his name Immanuel — God with us*, God in our nature, God at peace with us, in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling him *Jesus — a Saviour* (⁴⁰²Matthew 1:21-25), for, if he had not been *Immanuel — God with us*, he could not have been *Jesus — a Saviour*. Now this was a further sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them no doubt would work out for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were preludes to this. “Here is a sign for you, not in the depth nor in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant made with David, which you are no strangers to. The promised seed shall be Immanuel, *God with us*; let that word comfort you (²¹⁸⁰Isaiah 8:10), that *God is with us*, and (v. 8) that your land is Immanuel's land. Let not *the heart of the house of David* be moved thus (v. 2), nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Tabeal (v. 6), for nothing can cut off the entail on the Son of David that shall be Immanuel.” Note, The strongest consolations, in time of trouble, are those which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him. Of this child it is further foretold (v. 15) that though he shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up like other children: *Butter and honey shall he eat*, as other children do, particularly the children of that land which *flowed with milk and honey*. Though he be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he shall not therefore be fed with angels' food, but, as it becomes him, shall be *in all things made like unto his brethren*, (³⁸²⁷Hebrews 2:17. Nor shall he, though born thus by extraordinary generation, be a man immediately, but, as other children, shall advance gradually through the several states of infancy, childhood, and youth, to that of manhood, and growing in wisdom and stature, shall at length wax strong in spirit, and come to maturity, so as to know how *to refuse the evil and choose the good*. See (⁴¹²⁰Luke 2:40, 52. Note, Children are fed when they are little that they may be taught and instructed when they have grown up; they have their maintenance in order to their education.

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speedy destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, v. 16. “Before *this* child (so it should be read), this child which I have now in my arms” (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take

with him for a sign, v. 3), “before this *child shall know how to refuse the evil and choose the good*” (and those who saw what his present stature and forwardness were would easily conjecture how long that would be), “before this child be three or four years older, *the land that thou abhorrest*, these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians, which thou hast such an enmity to and standest in such dread of, *shall be forsaken of both their kings*, both Pekah and Rezin,” who were in so close an alliance that they seemed as if they were the kings of but one kingdom. This was fully accomplished; for within two or three years after this, Hoshea conspired against Pekah, and slew him (²⁵⁰2 Kings 15:30), and, before that, the king of Assyria took Damascus, and slew Rezin, (²⁶⁹2 Kings 16:9. Nay, there was a present event, which happened immediately, and when this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this future event. *Shear-jashub* signifies *The remnant shall return*, which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those 200,000 captives whom Pekah and Rezin had carried away, who were brought back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, ⁴³⁸2 Chronicles 28:8-15. The prophetic naming of this child having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this, which was further added concerning him, should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourages us to hope for another, if it engages us to prepare for another.

²⁰¹⁷ ISAIAH 7:17-25

JUDGMENTS ANNOUNCED

After the comfortable promises made to Ahaz as a branch of the house of David, here follow terrible threatenings against him, as a degenerate branch of that house; for though the loving-kindness of God shall not be utterly taken away, for the sake of David and the covenant made with him, yet his iniquity shall be *chastened with the rod*, and his sin with stripes. Let those that will not mix faith with the promises of God expect to hear the alarms of his threatenings.

I. The judgment threatened is very great, v. 17. It is very great, for it is general; it shall be brought upon the prince himself (high as he is, he shall

not be out of the reach of it), and upon the people, the whole body of the nation, and upon the royal family, *upon all thy father's house*; it shall be a judgment entailed on posterity, and shall go along with the royal blood. It is very great, for it shall be unprecedented — *days that have not come*; so dark, so gloomy, so melancholy, as never were the like since the revolt of the ten tribes, when Ephraim departed from Judah, which was indeed a sad time to the house of David. Note, The longer men continue in sin the sorer punishments they have reason to expect. It is the Lord that will bring these days upon them, for our times are in his hand, and who can resist or escape the judgments he brings?

II. The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment is the king of Assyria. Ahaz reposed great confidence in that prince for help against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement because he built much upon his interest in the king of Assyria, and had meanly promised to be his servant if he would send him some succours; he had also, made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, ^{<1267>}2 Kings 16:7, 8. Now God threatens that that king of Assyria whom he made his stay instead of God should become a scourge to him. He was so speedily; for, when he *came to him, he distressed him, but strengthened him not* (^{<1430>}2 Chronicles 28:20), the reed not only broke under him, but ran into his hand, and pierced it, and thenceforward the kings of Assyria were, for a long time, grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble. Note, The creature that we make our hope commonly proves our hurt. The king of Assyria, not long after this, made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer the prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explication of v. 8, where it is foretold that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people; and it is easy to suppose that the prophet (at v. 17) turns his speech to the king of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah. But the expositors universally understand it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe,

1. Summons given to the invaders (v. 18): *The Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee.* See ^{<2355>}Isaiah 5:26. Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and are as easily crushed, shall yet, when God pleases, do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they

shall punctually meet to join in this work when God commands their attendance; for, when God has work to do, he will not be at a loss for instruments to do it with.

2. Possession taken by them, v. 19. It should seem as if the country were in no condition to make resistance. They find no difficulties in forcing their way, but *come and rest all of them in the desolate valleys*, which the inhabitants had deserted upon the first alarm, and left them a cheap and easy prey to the invaders. They shall come and rest in the low grounds like swarms of flies and bees, and shall render themselves impregnable by taking shelter in the holes of the rocks, as bees often do, and showing themselves formidable by appearing openly upon all thorns and all bushes; so generally shall the land be overspread with them. These bees shall knit upon the thorns and bushes, and there rest undisturbed.

3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated (v. 20): *The Lord shall shave the hair of the head, and beard, and feet*; he shall sweep all away, as the leper, when he was cleansed, *shaved off all his hair*, ^{Ⓢ48}Leviticus 14:8, 9. This is done with a razor which is hired, either which God has hired (as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay for. See ^{Ⓢ8}Ezekiel 29:18, 19), or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance. God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction which he hired into his service. Note, Many are beaten with that arm of flesh which they trusted to rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expense upon, when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and easy succour in God.

4. The consequences of this general depopulation.

(1.) The flocks of cattle shall be all destroyed, so that a man who had herds and flocks in abundance shall be stripped of them all by the enemy, and shall with much ado save for his own use a young cow and two sheep — a poor stock (v. 21), yet he shall think himself happy in having any left.

(2.) The few cattle that are left shall have such a large compass of ground to feed in that *they shall give abundance of milk*, and very good milk, such as shall produce butter enough, v. 22. There shall also be such want of men that the milk of one cow and two sheep shall serve a whole family, which used to keep abundance of servants and consume a great deal, but is now reduced.

(3.) The breed of cattle shall be destroyed; so that those who used to eat flesh (as the Jews commonly did) shall be necessitated to confine themselves to butter and honey, for there shall be no flesh for them; and the country shall be so depopulated that there shall be butter and honey enough for the few that are left in it.

(4.) Good land, that used to be let well, shall be all overrun with briars and thorns (v. 23); where there used to be a thousand vines planted, for which the tenants used to pay a thousand shekels, or pieces of silver, yearly rent, there shall be nothing now but briars and thorns, no profit either for landlord or tenant, all being laid waste by the army of the invaders. Note, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness; and it is just with him to turn vines into briars if we, instead of bringing forth grapes to him, bring forth wild grapes, ~~2304~~ Isaiah 5:4.

(5.) The implements of husbandry shall be turned into instruments of war, v. 24. The whole land having become briars and thorns, the grounds that men used to come to with sickles and pruning-hooks to gather in the fruits they shall now come to with arrows and bows, to hunt for wild beasts in the thickets, or to defend themselves from the robbers that lurk in the bushes, seeking for prey, or to kill the serpents and venomous beasts that are hid there. This denotes a very sad change of the face of that pleasant land. But what melancholy change is there which sin will not make with a people?

(6.) Where briars and thorns were wont to be of use and to do good service, even in the hedges, for the defence of the enclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up, and all laid in common. There shall be briars and thorns in abundance where they should not be, but none where they should be, v. 25. *The hills that shall be digged with the mattock*, for special use, from which the cattle used to be kept off with the fear of briars and thorns, shall now be thrown open, the *hedges broken down for the boar out of the wood* to waste it, ~~2305~~ Psalm 80:12, 13. It shall be left at large for oxen to run in and less cattle. See the effect of sin and the curse; it has made the earth a forest of thorns and thistles, except as it is forced into some order by the constant care and labour of man. And see what folly it is to set our hearts upon possessions of lands, be they every so fruitful, ever so pleasant; if they lie ever so little neglected and uncultivated, or if they be abused by a wasteful careless heir or tenant, or the country be laid waste

by war, they will soon become frightful deserts. Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.