

extensive, strict, and accurate, will be this scrutiny, that every work must be brought into judgment, and every secret thing that men do, whether it be good or evil; and every man will be rewarded according to his works. God is also to be considered as the judge of kingdoms and nations, as well as of individuals, only with this difference, that the period of retribution for the latter, will be after the close of the present scene, and the full measure of rewards and punishments will be dispensed in a future world, whereas, on the other hand, nations as such, or in their national capacity, are judged and their rewards and punishments dispensed in the present state. This world is the only theatre on which nations exist. Here they are either built up or pulled down, exalted to a state of national prosperity, or corrected and punished by severe chastisements. These national calamities are sometimes inflicted for their good, but at others for their extinction from the list of nations. *Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin (particularly national sin) is the reproach to any people.* The prophet Jeremiah, as well in this chapter as in many other parts of his prophecy, gives an affecting and melancholy picture of the corruption and degeneracy of the Jews. This degeneracy consisted of two branches; which have not only a natural but a necessary connection together; viz. In an apostacy from the principles and practice of the true religion, by adopting the idolatrous customs of the surrounding nations, and in the awful prevalence of almost every species of immorality. This the prophet paints in glowing colours, chap. 2, xiii. *For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* For these things God threatens them with his displeasure, the fruits of which they soon after so severely experienced. The words of the text are twice repeated in this chapter, viz. ver. ix & xxix, to show that this visitation and vengeance were both certain and necessary in the nature of things. *Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* The visitation here threatened was a national visitation, and the sins for which they were to be visited were national sins. For the farther illustration of the subject, I shall