

placed in the forefront of the battle, Nathan told David a story which aroused the king's indignation and led him to take a strong stand on the side of righteousness. Then the prophet pointed out that the king's situation was precisely identical to that against which he had declared his wrath, and David was ready to receive the message.

Similarly Amos, when he spoke at Bethel, did not begin with denunciation of the sins of the people of Israel, but first pointed out the sins and coming punishment of the people of the surrounding nations. After this had won the approbation and respectful attention of the people of Israel, he proceeded to show that they also were guilty in God's sight.

Again, we find in Isaiah 7 that when God sent the prophet to give to Ahaz God's condemnation of the wicked alliance with the ungodly Assyrians, Isaiah did not begin by denouncing Ahaz. Instead he began his message with words of encouragement, denouncing the enemy and promising God's protection to those who would be faithful. Here the situation is rather similar. He begins with denunciation of the Israelite enemy. Although Isaiah is speaking to the leaders of Judah, he begins with words of woe against the drunkards of Ephraim. He declares that their beautiful capital, Samaria, will be trodden under foot and become like a fading flower. The Judean nobles, who are anxious to arouse the patriotic zeal of the people in order that they will fight tenaciously to hold off the Ephraimite attack until Assyrian help will come, rejoice in this declaration of Isaiah since they feel that it will help them in their plans. As long as he is attacking others and saying nothing against them, and particularly when these others are the present enemies of their nation, they rejoice that his message should be heard.

We are not sure that they rejoiced quite as much in the message of verses 5 and 6, when Isaiah declared that a time was coming when the people would no longer find their crown of glory in the splendid situation of their city at the head of the fat valleys, or in their earthly plans, but in the Lord of Hosts, who Himself would give victory and judgment to those who are His own. However, it is likely that the apostate Judean nobles felt that, after all, this was a mere harmless bit of pious talk, and the prophet would soon return to his patriotic denunciation of the enemy nations.