

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 17

Under the simile of two eagles and a vine are represented the kings of Babylon and Egypt, and the condition of the Jews, who are threatened with ruin for their perfidy; and yet a promise is made of the raising up of the house of Judah, and family of David, in the Messiah. The prophet is bid to deliver a riddle or parable to the house of Israel, (³¹⁷⁰Ezekiel 17:1,2). The riddle or parable is concerning two eagles and a vine, which is delivered, (³¹⁷³Ezekiel 17:3-10); and the explanation of it is in (³¹⁷¹Ezekiel 17:11-15); and then the destruction of the Jews is threatened for their treachery to the king of Babylon, (³¹⁷⁶Ezekiel 17:16-21); and the chapter is closed with a promise of the Messiah, and the prosperity of his kingdom, (³¹⁷²Ezekiel 17:22-24).

Ver. 1. *And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying.*] After the prophet had been sent to charge the Jews with breaking the covenant with God, he is sent to rebuke and threaten them for breaking covenant with men, even with the king of Babylon; by whom they were in part carried into captivity, and another part remained in the land, as will be hereafter seen.

Ver. 2. *Son of man, put forth a riddle, &c.*] A dark saying, but a smart one: “whet a whetting”,^{f246} as in the Hebrew; something at first sight difficult to be understood, yet amusing and entertaining; and, when solved, very useful and instructive:

and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; or, “concerning the house of Israel”,^{f247}; as the Targum and Syriac version; something relating to them, and what would aptly describe and represent their case; for the prophet was bid to take such a method, not to hide things from them, but rather the more strongly to represent them to them; seeing hereby their attention would be excited, and things would be more fixed in their memories, and they would be put upon studying the meaning of them; and when explained to them, and understood, which was quickly done, they might be the more affected with them.

Ver. 3. *And say, thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] The riddle is not the prophet's, nor the parable his, but the Lord God's; and exceeding beautiful and apt it is, to signify the things designed by it; the wisdom of God is greatly displayed in it:

a great eagle; which is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, as it is explained, (^{<3772>}Ezekiel 17:12); who is compared to an eagle for his power and authority, that being the king of birds, and for his swiftness and voracity in conquering and subduing kingdoms; (see ^{<2480>}Jeremiah 48:40);

with great wings; so the Babylonish monarchy is signified by a lion with eagle's wings, (^{<2700>}Daniel 7:4); and the two parts of the Roman empire, into which it was divided at the death of Theodosius, are called two wings of a great eagle, (^{<6124>}Revelation 12:14); and so here it may denote the large kingdoms and provinces which belonged to the Babylonian monarchy; (see ^{<7001>}Esther 1:1);

longwinged; or having a "long member"^{f248}; meaning the body of the wing, which was long; and so, as the wings spread, may signify the breadth of his dominion, this the length of them, and both their extensiveness:

full of feathers; of cities, towns, people, armies, wealth, and riches:

which had divers colours; or an "embroidery"^{f249}; like that of the weaver, only needle work, consisting of various colours; and so it alludes to such eagles as are called the golden eagle, and "asterias", from their golden colour, and their being spotted like stars, and which are said to be of the largest size, as Bochart, from Aelianus^{f250}, observes; and may signify people of divers languages, customs, manners, and circumstances, subject to the government of the king of Babylon:

came unto Lebanon; the northern border of the land of Judea, and invaded it; where were the mountain and forest of Lebanon, famous for the cedars that grew there, from whence the whole land may here take its name, as being more apt for the allegory used: or the city of Jerusalem, where were the temple built of the cedars of Lebanon, as many of its palaces and houses also were; whither the king of Babylon came, and took it, and who came northward, as Babylon was:

and took the highest branch of the cedar; by the "cedar" is meant, either the nation in general, or the royal family in particular; and by the "highest branch" the then reigning king, Jeconiah with the princes and nobles of the

land, who were taken and carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar; (see ^{<1244>}2 Kings 24:14-16).

Ver. 4. *He cropped off the top of his young twigs, &c.*] By which are meant the princes of the land, or the several branches of the royal family; the top of which was King Jeconiah, who was but young and tender, being but eighteen years of age when he began his reign, and this was within three months after; and who was no more able to withstand the force of the king of Babylon, than a tender twig so ravenous a bird as an eagle, (^{<1248>}2 Kings 24:8); whose superior power and strength is signified by the cropping off of a tender twig:

and carried it into a land of traffic; not into the land of Canaan, as the Septuagint, and some other versions, literally render it; but into Babylon, which was become a place of great merchandise, through the great concourse of people to it, and the large additions made to the empire:

he set it in a city of merchants; meaning the city of Babylon, perhaps in particular, as distinct from the country before mentioned: the word for “merchants” signifies “apothecaries” or “druggists”^{f251}; and may design such merchants as traded in sweet spices and aromatic drugs. The words may be rendered, “and brought it out of the land of Canaan”^{f252}; out of which Jeconiah and his nobles were carried by the king of Babylon; so the particle **l a** sometimes signifies “from”, or “out of”, as in (^{<1180>}1 Kings 8:30); and others^{f253}, “and in a city of merchants he set it”; in Babylon, famous for merchants; whom the Jews, being captives, were obliged to attend in a servile manner.

Ver. 5. *He took also of the seed of the land, &c.*] Of the land of Judea, a native of it, not a stranger; not one of another country, a Babylonian; not one of his own nobles or princes, did Nebuchadnezzar, the eagle, take and set upon the throne of Judea, but one of their own, even one of the king’s seed, of the blood royal, as it is explained, (^{<2573>}Ezekiel 17:13), Mattaniah, the uncle of Jeconiah, whom the king of Babylon called Zedekiah, and made him king in his room:

and planted it in a fruitful field; in the land of Judea, and in Jerusalem the royal city:

he placed [it] by great waters; many people, (^{<6675>}Revelation 17:15); over whom he ruled, and by whom he was supported in his royal dignity:

[and] set it [as] a willow tree; which loves moist places, and grows up thick: unless it should be rendered, “he set it with great circumspection”^{f254}; took a great deal of care and caution in placing him upon the throne; he made a covenant with him, took an oath of him, and hostages for the performance of it, (³⁶⁷¹³Ezekiel 17:13). The Targum is,

“a planted vine he set it,”

to make it agree with what follows; but the word in the Chaldee and Arabic languages signifies a kind of willow, as we render it, as Ben Melech observes^{f255}.

Ver. 6. *And it grew, &c.*] King Zedekiah reigned and prospered, and the kingdom flourished under him:

and became a spreading vine of low stature; not so flourishing as it had been heretofore, in former reigns; it did not rise up to a cedar, as it had been, but was like a vine, which, though flourishing, does not rise up high, but runs upon the ground, and is dependent on something else; so the king and kingdom of Judah, though in tolerable circumstances, yet were humble and dependent on the king of Babylon:

whose branches turned towards him; the eagle, Nebuchadnezzar, to whom the people of the Jews were tributary:

and the roots thereof were under him; they were rooted and settled in their own land, yet under the power, and at the dispose, of the Babylonish monarch:

so it became a vine; a flourishing kingdom in some measure, though attended with some degree of weakness and dependence as a vine:

and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs; increased in people and in riches; particularly the king had many children, so that there was a prospect of a succession, and of a more flourishing estate, and a continuance of it, (³⁶⁷¹⁰Jeremiah 52:10).

Ver. 7. *There was also another great eagle, &c.*] Hophra king of Egypt, a very powerful prince, whom Herodotus^{f256} calls Apries; and says he was the most happy and fortunate, after Psammitichus, of all the kings that were before; though not so mighty as the king of Babylon; therefore all the same things are not said of the one as of the other:

with great wings and many feathers: had large dominions, but not go extensive as the former, and therefore is not said to be “longwinged” as he; and had “many feathers”, but not “full” of them, nor had it such a variety; he had many people, and much wealth, and a large army, but not equal to the king of Babylon:

and, behold, this vine did bend her roots towards him; Zedekiah, and the people of the Jews under him; inclined to an alliance with the king of Egypt, and gave him some private intimations of it:

and shot forth her branches towards him; sent ambassadors to acquaint him with it, (³⁵⁷¹⁵Ezekiel 17:15);

that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation; Nebuchadnezzar had planted this vine, and made furrows for the watering of it, and by his means it was become prosperous and flourishing; but Zedekiah, not content with the greatness and glory he had raised him to, sought to the king of Egypt to help him with horses and people, in order to free himself from subjection to the king of Babylon, and to increase his lustre and glory: the allusion is thought to be to the trenches and canals of the river Nile, by which the land of Egypt was watered: the words may be rendered, “out of the rivulets of her plantation”^{f257} which best agrees with watering.

Ver. 8. *It was planted in, a good soil, by great waters, &c.*] As is expressed in (³⁵⁷⁰⁵Ezekiel 17:5); this was done by the king of Babylon, who had raised Zedekiah from a low estate to a high one, and set him on the throne of Judah, over many people; and put him in such a condition, and in such circumstances, that he and his people might have been very happy, could they have been content:, for his view was,

that he might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine; that he and his people might grow numerous and rich, and be a prosperous and flourishing kingdom; this is mentioned to aggravate the ingratitude of Zedekiah, and the people of the Jews, in rebelling against the king of Babylon, who had used them well, and of whom they had no reason to complain.

Ver. 9. *Say thou, thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] Tell Zedekiah and his people, in the name of the Lord, what will be the issue of his ingratitude and treachery to the king of Babylon, and his vain confidence in the king of Egypt:

shall it prosper? the vine, the kingdom of Judah, and Zedekiah the king of it; can it be thought that prosperity will attend such conduct as this? was it ever known that persons guilty of such vices ever succeeded?

shall he not pull up the roots thereof; the first eagle, Nebuchadnezzar, being provoked by the rebellion of the king of Judah and his people; will he not come against them, and utterly destroy them, and root them up from being a people and a nation?

and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? the sons of the king, and of the nobles, and people of the land; so that the kingdom shall be ruined, and no hope left of its ever being restored again; which is the case of a vine when withered:

it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring; whereas it had been a springtime with this vine, under the influence of the king of Babylon, its leaves were green and flourishing; but now should wither, not as leaves do in autumn, which is to be expected, but in spring, which must be fatal; signifying, that in the midst of their prosperity, and when there was the greatest hope and expectation of a continuance and increase of it, utter ruin should come upon them:

even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof; signifying with what ease the king of Babylon would take Jerusalem, and the land of Judea, its king and its princes, and utterly destroy them; he would have no need of a large army, or to employ all his forces, a few, were sufficient to do it; even as it does not require many hands to pluck up, a vine by the roots, a single person is equal to it.

Ver. 10. *Yea, behold, [being] planted, &c.*] Supposing it ever so well planted, as first by Nebuchadnezzar; and still put into a better condition by the assistance of the king of Egypt, as was imagined:

shall it prosper? it shall not; their own strength, with the help of the king of Egypt, will not be able to protect them from the rage of the king of Babylon:

shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? which is very hurtful to vines, and by which is meant the Chaldean army; for Babylon, as Kimchi observes, lay northeast of the land of Israel; and it signifies how easily the destruction would be brought about, it would be only a touch of the east wind, and this vine would wither away atones:

it shall wither in the furrows where it grew; notwithstanding its being watered by Egypt, or the help and assistance that could afford it; or amidst all its prosperity, and the means of it, and the springing growing hope it had; or in the very country itself where it had been planted, and had flourished; Zedekiah and his princes were taken in the plains of Jericho, and his children and princes were put to death in Riblah, (^{<2418>}Jeremiah 52:8-10).

Ver. 11. *Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying.*] Here follows the explanation of the above riddle and parable, which the prophet from the Lord had orders to deliver.

Ver. 12. *Say now to the rebellious house, &c.*] It had been a rebellious house to God, and to his prophets, before; (see ^{<3118>}Ezekiel 2:5,6) and now, besides this was rebellious to the king of Babylon, to whom they were in some measure subject, (^{<3575>}Ezekiel 17:15);

know ye not what these [things mean]? the riddle and parable concerning the two eagles and the vine; suggesting that they must be very inattentive, and very stupid, if they did not know the meaning of them; for though the things intended were delivered in an enigmatical and parabolical way, yet they were easily to be understood by all that know the affairs of the Jewish nation; being things that were lately transacted there, and were obvious to everyone's view; but if they were so stupid and blockish as not to understand them, the prophet had the following order, to explain them to them:

tell [them], behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem; so that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is meant by the first "eagle", and the land of Judea, and particularly Jerusalem, by Lebanon, it came unto, (^{<3178>}Ezekiel 17:3). The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, read this and the following verses in the future; as if these were things that were yet to come to pass, whereas they are related as things already done; and so the Targum renders all in the past sense, as the history of them requires it should:

and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; the king of Judea, and the princes of it; Jeconiah and his nobles, who had been carried captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar; for Ezekiel was among these captives, (^{<3102>}Ezekiel 1:2); (see ^{<1242>}2 Kings 24:12-16); so that it appears that by the "twigs" of the cedar the princes of the land are designed; and by the "top" of them King Jeconiah; and by "the

land of traffic” the land of Chaldea; and by the “city of merchants” the city of Babylon, (^{257H}Ezekiel 17:4); whither they were carried.

Ver. 13. *And hath taken of the king’s seed, &c.*] One of the royal family, signified by the seed of the land, (^{257B}Ezekiel 17:5). Mattaniah, son of King Josiah, and uncle to King Jeconiah; whom Nebuchadnezzar took and made king of Judea, and called him Zedekiah, which signifies the “justice of the Lord”: to put him in mind of doing justly, by observing the covenant and oath after mentioned, or that he must expect vengeance:

and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him; he gave him the throne and kingdom upon certain conditions to be performed, and for the perform once of which he made him swear by the God of Israel; (see ^{486B}2 Chronicles 36:13);

he hath also taken the mighty of the land: or, “the rams of the land”^{f258}; the principal men of it for wisdom, riches, and valour, the princes and nobles of it; which he did, as to weaken the nation, that it might not be so capable of rebelling against him, so to be hostages for the performance of the covenant entered into; and this is meant by planting the seed with circumspection, (^{257B}Ezekiel 17:5).

Ver. 14. *That the kingdom might be base, &c.*] Low or humble; its king but a viceroy, a tributary to the king of Babylon; and the subjects obliged to a tax, payable to him; and this is intended by the vine being of “low stature”, (^{257B}Ezekiel 17:6);

that it might not lift up itself; above other neighbouring kingdoms and states; and particularly that it might not rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, but be kept in a dependence on him, and subjection to him:

[but] that by keeping of his covenant it might stand; continue a kingdom, and Zedekiah king of it; so that it was for their good that such a covenant was made, and it was their interest to keep it; for, had it not been made, it would have ceased to have been a kingdom, and would have become a province of the Babylonian monarchy, and have been put under the government of one of Nebuchadnezzar’s princes or captains; and, should they break it, would endanger the ruin of their state, as the event showed. In the Hebrew text it is, “to keep his covenant, to make it stand”; or, “to stand to it”^{f259}; that is, as it should seem, to make the covenant stand firm. The Targum is,

“that it might keep his covenant, and serve him;”

Nebuchadnezzar.

Ver. 15. *But he rebelled against him, &c.*] Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon, broke the covenant he entered into, and violated his oath:

in sending his ambassadors into Egypt; to form an alliance with the king of it, and obtain help from him to break off the Babylonian yoke; this is signified by the vine “bending [its] roots, [and] shooting forth [its] branches [towards] another great eagle”, the king of Egypt, (^{<3670>}Ezekiel 17:7);

that they might give him horses and much people; with both which Egypt abounded, (^{<1103>}1 Kings 10:28 ^{<2300>}Isaiah 31:1,3); but in Judea there was a scarcity, as of horses, so of men, by means of the multitude of captives which the king of Babylon had carried away; wherefore Zedekiah sent to Egypt for both, for recruits of men; and for horses to form a cavalry, to free himself from the king of Babylon, and defend himself and people against him:

shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such [things]? that is guilty of breaking an express law of God, which forbids the kings of Israel multiplying horses, and sending to Egypt for them, (^{<6716>}Deuteronomy 17:16); and placing confidence in an arm of flesh, (^{<2300>}Isaiah 31:1,3 36:9); and of such base ingratitude to the king of Babylon, who had set him upon the throne, and put him in a comfortable and flourishing condition:

or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? shall one guilty, as of the other crimes, so of breach of covenant, and of perjury, escape the vengeance of God and man? he shall not.

Ver. 16. *[As] I live, saith the Lord God, &c.*] This is the form of an oath, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe; the Lord swears, in his wrath, by himself, by his life; this shows how much he resented, what Zedekiah had done, and how sure and certain his ruin was:

surely in the place [where] the king [dwelleth] that made him king; in Babylon, where Nebuchadnezzar dwelt, that made Zedekiah king of Judah; which is mentioned, to point out the ingratitude of that prince to the king of Babylon:

whose oath he despised, whose covenant he broke; the oath of fealty and allegiance, which Zedekiah took to Nebuchadnezzar; and the covenant entered into between them, by which the former held the kingdom of Judea of the latter: the oath he made light of, though solemn, one made by the God of Israel; and the covenant he broke, though ratified by an oath; in which things were given to him he could not claim, at least possess, but by the courtesy of the conqueror; these sins were displeasing to God: oaths and covenants, though made with conquerors, and with Heathen princes, are to be kept:

[even] with him; that is, with Nebuchadnezzar:

in the midst of Babylon he shall die; when first taken he was had to Riblah, and there his eyes were put out; and after that he was carried to Babylon, and put in prison, and there died, (²⁵¹⁰Jeremiah 52:9-11).

Ver. 17. *Neither shall Pharaoh, with [his] mighty army and great company, make for him in the war, &c.*] The king of Egypt, to whom Zedekiah applied for horses and men to help him; though he should come with a great army, and a large multitude of people, yet should be of no use to Zedekiah, nor do any hurt to Nebuchadnezzar, or hinder him from taking Jerusalem:

by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons; that is, when Nebuchadnezzar should besiege Jerusalem, and raise mounts, and build fortifications, in order to take the city, and destroy its inhabitants; as he did, (²⁵¹⁰Jeremiah 52:4); the Egyptian army should not be able to hinder him going on with the siege, and taking the city; for though the siege was broke up for a time, upon the approach of Pharaoh's army, yet Nebuchadnezzar, having conquered the Egyptians, returned again to the siege of Jerusalem, and took it; (see ²⁵⁷⁵Jeremiah 37:5-10).

Ver. 18. *Seeing he despised the oath, by breaking the covenant, &c.*] This is repeated again, to show the heinousness of the sin Zedekiah had been guilty of, and what was the cause of his ruin:

when, lo, he had given his hand; to the king of Babylon, to testify his hearty agreement with him, and that he might depend upon the oath and covenant being sacredly observed by him. This was a rite for custom frequently and early used in different nations, when covenants and agreements were entered into; we find it used in the times of Homer^{f260}; and among the Romans. When Antoninus, Lepidus, and Octavius made

peace, the historian says^{f261}, they joined their hands together. Virgil^{f262} speaks of the same ceremony used by Anchises to Achaemenides, for confirmation of friendship. Though some understand this of his giving the hand to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and entering into an alliance with him, and broke the covenant and oath made to the king of Babylon; and so the Targum,

“and, lo, he stretched out his hand to Pharaoh:”

and hath done all these [things]; been guilty of such and so many crimes, as ingratitude, perjury, covenant breaking, and vain confidence:

he shall not escape; divine vengeance, just and proper punishment for his sins.

Ver. 19. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, [as] I live, &c.*] A repetition of the oath of God as before, expressing his indignation at the king of Judah, and the certainty of his ruin:

surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken; the Lord calls it his oath, because it was made and taken in his name, (⁴⁸⁶³2 Chronicles 36:13); and his covenant, because it was agreeable to his will, and was made in his sight, and he was solemnly appealed to at the making of it; all which were an aggravation of Zedekiah’s sin in violating them, and made his punishment the heavier:

even it will I recompense upon his own head; he shall personally bear the punishment due to such crimes. The Targum is,

“I will revenge his way upon his head.”

Jarchi thinks this refers to the putting out of his eyes; and Kimchi takes notice of the same sense.

Ver. 20. *And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, &c.*] (See Gill on “³²¹³Ezekiel 12:13”); where the same words are used, and of the same person:

and I will bring him to Babylon; though, as it is said in the place referred to, he should not see it, his eyes being put out before he was brought thither:

and I will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me; for though it was breaking covenant and oath with a Heathen

prince, yet it was a trespass against God, in whose name they were made; and his being laid in prison at Babylon, and kept there to the time of his death, was the Lord's pleading with him, and judging of him; it was a reproof for his sins, and a condemnation of him and them.

Ver. 21. *And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword,* &c.] So those of his army that fled, and attempted to make their escape, when the city of Jerusalem was taken, as many as fell into the Chaldean army, which was round about the city, at least a great number of them, fell by the sword of the Chaldeans, (^{<2537>}Jeremiah 52:7,8);

and they that remain shall be scattered towards all winds; and so it was, that such that escaped the sword were either carried captive into Babylon, or fled some one way, and some another, even into all parts, east, west, north, and south:

and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken [it]; the Targum adds, by my word, and will do it; who is the Lord God omniscient and omnipotent, just and righteous; faithful and true, as to his word of promise, so of threatening.

Ver. 22. *Thus saith the Lord God,* &c.] Lest it should be thought, by the above prophecies, that the tribe of Judah should be utterly lost, and the family of David extinct, and the promise to him void, that he should have one of his seed to sit upon his, throne for evermore, (^{<3421>}Psalms 132:11,12); it is here in a figurative manner signified, that of his seed the Messiah should be raised up, by whom the church and kingdom of God would be brought into a flourishing state and condition:

I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar; Nebuchadnezzar had took one of the family of David, and set, him upon the throne, signified by taking of the seed of the land, and planting it, (^{<2675>}Ezekiel 17:5); but without success; wherefore the Lord here promises that he will “also”, take one and plant it, which should thrive and prosper: by the “high cedar” is meant the Jewish nation, which the Lord chose and set on high above all nations of the earth distinguishing it with peculiar blessings and favours; for which reason it may be compared to the high and spreading cedar; (see ^{<9215>}Numbers 24:5,6 ^{<3706>}Deuteronomy 7:6,7 28:1); and by “the highest branch” of it the tribe of Judah, who prevailed above his brethren, because from him came the chief ruler, (^{<332>}1 Chronicles 5:2); and from whence the

Messiah was to come, and did, (⁰¹⁴⁹⁰Genesis 49:10 ⁸⁰⁷⁴Hebrews 7:14) (⁶⁰⁸⁵Revelation 5:5);

and set [it]; namely, the slip taken from the highest branch of the high cedar; or one that should descend from the Jewish nation, and particularly from the tribe of Judah, more fully described in the next clause:

I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one; and by the “top” and “young twigs” of the highest branch of the cedar, or of the chief tribe in Israel, are meant the house and family of David, the royal family, and the descendants of it, the chief of the tribe of Judah; and by the “tender one” is designed the Messiah; and so Jarchi interprets it; and which interpretation is mentioned by Kimchi, though he would have Zerubbabel intended; and owns it to be the sense of the Targum, which is this,

“I will bring one of the kingdom of the house of David, which is like to a high cedar, and I will raise him up an infant from his children’s children;”

and so Abendana observes, that from Shealtiel, the son of Jeconiah, comes forth the King Messiah, who shall rule over all the world, and under whom every bird of wing shall dwell. The Messiah is often called a “branch” in prophecy, (²³⁰²Isaiah 4:2 11:1 ²²⁷⁵Jeremiah 23:5 ³⁰⁸⁸Zechariah 3:8 6:12); and here a “tender twig” or branch, as in (²⁵⁰²Isaiah 53:2); a “tender plant”; which is expressive of the meanness of his descent, David’s family being very low at the time of his birth, and of the contemptible appearance he made in the form of a servant; having also all the sinless infirmities of the human nature on him, as well as was attended with poverty, griefs, and sorrows of various kinds; and so made a very unpromising appearance of being the great Prophet, Priest, and King in Israel: and now by the “cropping off” of this tender twig seems to be designed not the incarnation of the Messiah, but his sufferings and death; whereby he was cut off, not for himself, but for the sins of his people, and in which his divine Father had a considerable hand, (²⁵⁰⁸Isaiah 53:8,10); and to which is owing the great fruitfulness of his kingdom and interest, (⁶¹²⁴John 12:24); moreover, this may respect not only the person of the Messiah, and his mean appearance in the world; but also his church and interest, which were at first like a little stone cut out of the mountain, and like a grain of mustard seed, the least of all seeds, (²⁰²⁴Daniel 2:34,35 ⁴¹³¹Matthew 13:31, 32); the Gospel, which was the instrument of raising the church of God, was very contemptible, because of its subject, a crucified Christ; and the first

preachers of it were mean and illiterate persons; those that received it were the poor of this world, and those but a few, and they the offscouring of all things;

and will plant [it] on a high mountain and eminent; which may be expressive not of the incarnation of Christ, but rather of his ascension to heaven after his death, and resurrection from the dead; and the constitution of him upon that as Lord and Christ, or the setting of him up as King over God's holy hill of Zion, the church of God: and no doubt but there is an allusion to Mount Zion, and to Jerusalem, from whence the Gospel first went forth, and where the first Gospel church was planted; and being said to be on a mountain high and eminent, may note both the visibility and stability of the church of Christ.

Ver. 23. *In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it, &c.]* In the highest part of the land of Israel, as Jerusalem is said to be by the Jewish writers; the land of Israel, they say, particularly Kimchi upon the place, was higher than all other lands, and Jerusalem was the highest part of that land; here the Messiah preached and wrought his miracles, even in the mountain of the Lord's house, the temple; and here the first Christian church was planted and established:

and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; that is, the tender twig or branch cropped off, set and planted as before described: by the "boughs" or "branches" it brings forth may be meant believers, who are as branches in Christ; are of the same nature with him, united to him; have a communication of life and grace from him; are supported and strengthened by him; and so, abiding in him, persevere to the end; (see ^{<B150>}John 15:4,5); and the same may be said of particular churches; and by "fruit" it is said to bear may be designed the persons of the chosen, redeemed, and called; who are the fruit of Christ's death, and of the ministration of his Gospel, (^{<B124>}John 12:24 15:16); or the blessings of grace which are in him, come from him, and are communicated by him; even fill spiritual blessings, as justification, pardon, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life; in short, both grace and glory; and thus he becomes and appears to be a "goodly cedar", in his person, office, and grace, to his people, to whom he is altogether lovely; being full of grace and truth, (^{<A156>}Song of Solomon 5:16 ^{<B114>}John 1:14); and in his kingdom and interest, especially in the latter day, when the kingdoms of this world shall become his:

and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell; by whom are designed converted sinners of all sorts, and of all nations, Jews and Gentiles; compared to birds, because weak, defenceless, and timorous; exposed to danger; and wonderfully delivered; are subject to wander and go astray; and for their chirping and warbling notes: now these may be said to “dwell” under the “shadow” of the “branches” of this “goodly cedar”, Christ and his church; that is, under the ministration of the word and ordinances, which is a very delightful and refreshing shadow, a very safe and fruitful one, (^{211B}Song of Solomon 2:3 ^{214D}Hosea 14:7 ^{214E}Isaiah 4:6 25:4); and here saints choose to dwell, and determine to abide and continue, as it is their interest and happiness so to do; and what a flocking and tabernacling of these birds here will there be in the latter day, where they will chirp and sing in the height of Zion? (^{214A}Isaiah 66:4,8 ^{211D}Jeremiah 31:12); compare with this (^{413D}Matthew 13:32); where our Lord is thought by some to allude to this passage.

Ver. 24. *And all the trees of the field shall know*, &c.] All the nations of the World, and the great ones, and the mighty men of the earth, shall know, own, and acknowledge, when the above things are accomplished:

that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: some by the high and green tree understand Zedekiah, who was brought low; and by the “low” and “dry tree”, Jeconiah, who was raised by the king of Babylon, (²⁶²¹Jeremiah 52:11,31,32); this is Jarchi’s sense, and is mentioned by Kimchi: others, by the former, think Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonish monarchy are intended, which were brought down; and, by the latter, the house of David, and kingdom of Judah, which were exalted: though rather by the one are meant the people of the Jews, once the people of God, but now cast off; and by the other the Gentiles, called by the grace of God, and received by him: though it seems best of all to interpret the “high and green tree” of the mighty kingdoms of this world, which will be put down by Christ; and the “low and dry tree” of his kingdom and interest, which shall flourish and spread abundantly, and be an everlasting kingdom; (see ^{214B}Daniel 2:44);

I the Lord have spoken and have done [it]; because the prophecy of it is sure, and because of the certainty of the fulfilment of it, it is said to be done as soon as it was spoken of.