

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH 3

In this chapter, under the type of Joshua the high priest, is showed the state and condition of the priesthood, and of the church of God, in his times; and in it are various promises concerning the true High Priest, Christ, and of the efficacy and permanency of his priesthood. The vision of Joshua is in the form of a judicial process: Joshua is the person accused, and is described by his situation, standing before the Angel of the Lord; and by the filthy garments he had on, which were the ground of the charge against him, (~~<380B>~~Zechariah 3:1,3) The accuser of him is Satan, who stood at his right hand; and his Judge is the Angel of the Lord, before whom he was, (~~<380B>~~Zechariah 3:1). The sentence given against his accuser is by way of rebuke, enforced by the Lord's choice of Jerusalem, and merciful deliverance of this person; and, as given in his favour, is an order to take his filthy garments from him, and clothe him with change of raiment, and to put a fair mitre on his head; which were accordingly done, (~~<380B>~~Zechariah 3:2,4,5) and a promise is made him, by way of protestation, that if he would walk in his ways, and keep his charge, he should judge his house, and keep his courts, and should have a walking place among those that stood by, (~~<380B>~~Zechariah 3:6,7) and next Joshua, and those that were with him, are addressed as men wondered at; and are called upon to hearken to a promise of the Messiah, under the character of the Branch, (~~<380B>~~Zechariah 3:8) and under that of a stone with seven eyes on it, and engravings in it, by whom the iniquity of God's people is removed, (~~<380B>~~Zechariah 3:9) and the chapter is closed with an account of the prosperity, peace, and safety of the saints under the Gospel dispensation, (~~<380B>~~Zechariah 3:10).

Ver. 1. *And he showed me Joshua the high priest*, etc.] Who was one that came up out of the captivity, and was principally concerned in building the temple, and had many enemies to obstruct him in it; and who falling into sin, or his sons, in marrying strange wives, (~~<450B>~~Ezra 10:18), which he might connive at, Satan was ready to catch it up, and accuse him before God; though rather Joshua is to be considered, not personally, but typically, representing the state and condition of the priesthood, in which

office he was; and which was very low, mean, and abject, under the second temple; or the church of God, which the priests, especially the high priest, were representatives of: and indeed this vision may be accommodated to the case of any single believer, fallen into sin, and accused by Satan, and whose advocate Christ is:

standing before the Angel of the Lord; not any created angel, but Christ the Angel of God's presence, who is called Jehovah, (^{
}Zechariah 3:2) is the rebuker of Satan, and the advocate of his people; and who takes away their sins, and clothes them with his righteousness: and "standing before" him does not mean barely being in his sight and presence, but as ministering to him; this being the posture both of angels and men, the servants of the Lord, (^{
}Daniel 7:10 ^{
}Psalm 134:1 135:1,2), either he was offering sacrifice for the people, or asking counsel of God for them; or rather giving thanks for his and their deliverance from captivity, being as brands taken out of the fire; and praying to be stripped of his filthy garments, and to be clothed with others more decent, and becoming his office; and for help and assistance in the building of the temple, and against those that obstructed him: also he was brought and placed here as a guilty person, charged with sin, and to be tried before him,

Satan standing at his right hand to resist him; either to hinder him in his work of building the temple, by stirring up Sanballat, and other enemies; or rather to accuse him of sin, and bring a charge against him, and get sentence passed upon him; so the accuser used to stand at the right hand of the accused. The Targum paraphrases it,

"and sin standing at his right hand to resist him:"

when the people of God fall into sin, Satan the accuser of the brethren, their avowed enemy, observes it, and accuses them before the Lord, and seeks their condemnation. Maimonides^{f39} understands this of his standing at the right hand of the angel; but it was not usual for the prosecutor, accuser, or pleader, whether for or against a person arraigned, to stand the right hand of the judge: indeed, in the Jewish sanhedrim, or grand court of judicature, there were two scribes stood before the judges; the one on the right hand, the other on the left; who took down in writing the pleadings in court, and the sentences of those that were acquitted, and of those that were condemned; he on the right hand the former, and the other on the left hand the latter^{f40}. The prince or chief judge of the court sat in the middle; and his deputy, called "Ab Beth Din", or father of the court, sat at his right

hand; and a wise man, a principal one, at his left^{f41}; but it was usual for the pleader, who was called **byr l [b**, “Baal Rib”, to stand on the right hand of the party cited into the court, whether he pleaded for or against him^{f42}: and to this custom is the allusion here, and in (³⁹⁴⁶Psalm 106:6,31) where Satan, who is the accuser of men, and pleads against them, is placed at the right hand, as here; and God, who pleads the cause of his poor people, is also represented as standing on their right hand. The business of Satan here was to accuse, to bring charges, to plead for condemnation, and endeavour to get the sentence of it passed against Joshua; for he was at his right hand, to be an “adversary” to him, as his name (Satan) signifies, which he has from

the word here used; being an enemy to mankind in general, and especially to the people of God, and more especially to persons in sacred public offices; to whom he is **αντιδικος**, “a court adversary”, as the Apostle Peter calls him, (⁴¹⁸⁸1 Peter 5:8) who appears in open court against them, and charges them in a most spiteful and malicious manner; and is a most, implacable, obstinate, and impudent one, as his name signifies, and the word from whence it is derived^{f43}; though Maimonides^{f44} thinks the name is derived from **h j ç**, which signifies to decline, or go back from anything; since he, without doubt, makes men to decline from the way of truth to the way of falsehood and error.

Ver. 2. *And the Lord said unto Satan*, etc.] The same with the Angel of the Lord, (³⁸⁸⁸Zechariah 3:1) having heard the charge brought by him against Joshua, here called Jehovah, being the Son of God, and properly God:

The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; these words may be considered, either as the intercession of Jehovah the Son with Jehovah the Father, for Joshua and his church, and against Satan; that he would reprove him for his malice and wickedness; stop his mouth, and silence him, that he might not go on to accuse; that he would confound his schemes, and restrain him from doing mischief; tread him down, and bruise him under the feet of his people, and pour out his wrath upon him: or as a declaration of what should be done to him, or what he himself would do; for it may be rendered, “the Lord will rebuke thee”^{f45}; as the following clause is by some, who take this to be a wish, and the following a positive declaration, that Jehovah the Father would certainly rebuke Satan; as might be concluded from the reasons and arguments used by the angel, taken from God’s choice of Jerusalem; the building of which Satan endeavoured to hinder,

though God had chosen it for his habitation and worship; and from the deliverance of Joshua out of the fire for that purpose: and this reproof of him on the behalf of his people is founded on their election of God:

even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; which act is eternal; springs from the love and grace of God towards them; antecedes all works, good or bad, done by them; stands firm, sure, and unalterable; such who are interested in it are called, justified, and shall be glorified; nor has Satan anything to do with them; nor will any charge of his be of any avail against them, (^{<4183>}Romans 8:33):

[is] not this a brand plucked out of the fire? which is to be understood of Joshua; not of his being delivered out of that fire, into which the Jews^{f46} say he was cast, along with Ahab and Zedekiah, whom the king of Babylon roasted in it, (^{<2022>}Jeremiah 29:22) when he marvellously escaped; others say^{f47} 8000 young priests fled to the temple, and were burnt in it, and only Joshua was preserved; but of his deliverance out of the Babylonish captivity, and also of the priesthood, which, during the captivity, when the temple was destroyed, and temple service ceased, was like a brand in the fire; and though Joshua the high priest was returned, and the priesthood in some measure restored, yet not to its former glory, the temple not being yet built; and therefore was but like a smoking firebrand; likewise the people of God may be meant; (see ^{<3041>}Amos 4:11), who are by nature like a branch cut off, a dry stick cast into the fire, and half burnt; they are in a state of separation from God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and they are unprofitable and unfruitful, and in danger in themselves of being consumed in the fire of divine wrath, of which they are as deserving as others, and are under the sentence of it; and, when convinced, have dreadful apprehensions of being consumed by it; but, through the grace, mercy, love, and power of God, they are plucked out of this state in the effectual calling, and are secured from everlasting destruction; wherefore Satan is rebuked for attempting to bring any who are instances of such grace and goodness into condemnation; it being wicked and malicious, bold and daring, vain and fruitless; since such are secured by the grace and power of God, and are preserved for everlasting glory and happiness.

Ver. 3. *Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments*, etc.] Having fallen into sin. The Jewish writers^{f48} interpret this of the sin of his children in marrying strange wives, (^{<4508>}Ezra 10:18) or he had married one himself, as Jerom from the Jews, on the place; or a whore, as Justin Martyr^{f49}

suggests; or had been slothful and sluggish in rebuilding the temple; and, be it what it will, Satan had aggravated it, and represented him as a most filthy creature, covered with sin, and as it were clothed with it: sins may well be called filthy garments, since righteousnesses are as filthy rags, (²³⁰⁶Isaiah 64:6). It may also denote the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood, and the pollutions in it, at least in those who officiated therein, and especially under the second temple; as well as may represent the defilements of the Lord's people by sins they fall into:

and stood before the angel: as an accused person, charged with sin, and waiting the issue of the process against him: he stood under an humble sense of his iniquities, looking to the blood and righteousness of Christ for pardon and justification; praying and entreating that these filthy garments might be took away from him, and he be clothed with fine linen, suitable to his character as a priest. Such a sordid dress was the habit of persons arraigned for crimes. It was usual, especially among the Romans, when a man was accused of, and charged with, capital crimes, and during his arraignment, to let down his hair, suffer his beard to grow long, to wear filthy ragged garments, and appear in a very dirty and sordid habit; hence such were called "sordidati"^{f50}: nay, it was not only customary for the accused person, when he was brought into court before the people to be tried, to be in such a filthy dress; but even his near relations, friends, and acquaintance, before the court went to voting, used to appear in like manner, with their hair dishevelled, and clothed with garments foul and out of fashion, weeping and crying, and deprecating punishment; thinking, by such a filthy and deformed habit, to move the pity of the people^{f51}. It is said of the ambassadors of the Rhodians at Rome, upon a certain victory obtained, that they appeared at first in white garments, suitable to a congratulation; but when they were told that the Rhodians had not so well deserved to be reckoned among the friends and allies of the Romans, they immediately put on sordid garments, and went about to the houses of the principal men, with prayers and tears entreating that cognizance might first be taken of their cause, before they were condemned^{f52}: though, on the contrary, some, when arraigned, as defying their accusers, and as a token of their innocence, and to show the fortitude of their minds, and even, if they could, to terrify the court itself, would dress out in the most splendid manner; or, however, would not follow the above custom. It is reported of Scipio Africanus, that when he was arraigned in court, he would not omit shaving his beard, nor put off his white garments, nor appear in the

common dress of arraigned persons^{f53}: and when Manlius Capitolinus was arraigned in court, none of his relations would change their clothes; and Appius Claudius, when he was tried by the tribunes of the common people, behaved with such spirit, and put on such a bold countenance, as thinking that by his ferocity he might strike terror into the tribunes; and so Herod, when he was accused before Hyrcanus, went into the court clothed in purple, and attended with a guard of armed men^{f54}: whether the above custom obtained in Judea, and so early as the times of this prophet, is not so evident; though Josephus ben Gorion says it was a custom for a guilty person to stand before the judges clothed in black, and his head covered with dust^{f55}; however, it is certain that with the Jews a distinction was made in the dress of priests, who, by the sanhedrim, were found guilty or not; such as were, were clothed and veiled in “black”; and such as were not, but were found right and perfect, were clothed in white; and went in, and ministered with their brethren the priests^{f56}.

Ver. 4. *And he answered, and spake*, etc.] That is, the Angel of the Lord, before whom Joshua stood, answered to the accusations of Satan, and the entreaties of Joshua: and spake

unto those that stood before him; not the fellows that sat before Joshua, (~~388~~ Zechariah 3:8) for the priests, who were Joshua’s fellows, could not take away sin; nor indeed can ministers of the Gospel, only ministerially or declaratively, as instruments, in bringing the good news of pardon to the comfort of distressed minds; whom the ministering angels may here represent, that stood before Christ the Archangel, the Head of all principalities and powers, and who are ministering spirits to him; and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“and he said to them who ministered before him;”

who, though they can not expiate sin, or make atonement for it, may bring the tidings of pardon to a poor fallen believer:

saying, Take away the filthy garments from him; it may be observed, that the garments of the priests were to be new and fair, according to the Jewish canons^{f57}; and if they became filthy, they did not whiten them, nor wash them, but left them for threads (or wicks of candles), and put on new; and so orders are here given not to wash the filthy garments of Joshua, but to take them away: it is not, take him, Satan, the address is not to him; nor angels, who are spoken to, take away this filthy creature from me, I can

not bear the sight of him; but take away his sins, not the being, power, or sense of them; nor does it signify making atonement for them, or removing them out of the sight of justice; but a taking them away out of Joshua's sight, and giving him a sense of pardon, a comfortable view of it, in which angels and ministers of the word may be assisting; (see ²¹⁸⁶Isaiah 6:6,7 40:2) and is effectually done, when Christ, who has power to forgive sin, makes an application of forgiving grace himself, as follows:

and unto him he said; that is, the Angel of the Lord said to Joshua:

Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee; which shows that he had sinned, and interprets the filthy garments he was clothed with: Christ took his iniquity upon himself, bore and made satisfaction for it, and removed it as far from him as the east from the west; and now caused the guilt of it to pass from his conscience, and gave him a comfortable view of the free and full pardon of it. The word "behold" is prefixed to this declaration of pardon, to ascertain the truth of it, to fix his attention to it, and raise his admiration at it:

and I will clothe thee with change of raiment; garments to put on and off; for, in those hot countries, they used to shift their garments often; and these do not design priestly garments, such as the high priest put on, on the day of atonement, when he put off his common garments, and, having done his work, shifted again, (¹⁸⁶³Leviticus 16:23,24) such change of garments the high priest, indeed, had; and so had the common priests; for they did not wear the same garments, when out of service, as when in it; (see Gill on "²⁶¹⁴Ezekiel 42:14") (see Gill on "²⁶¹⁹Ezekiel 44:19"); but priestly garments seem rather to be intended in the following verses, which were put on along with the mitre: change of raiment here rather signify such as used to be wore on festivals and holy days, rich, valuable, precious garments; such as men wore when they went abroad, and appeared in company, and upon return home put off again; and especially clean neat garments, as some render the word ^{f58}, in opposition to filthy ones Joshua was clothed with: when arraigned persons put on sordid garments, they were said, "moutare vestem", to change their apparel; but here clean, instead of filthy garments, are called change of raiment with great propriety; and a happy exchange is this indeed! The word is in the plural number, and may point at more garments than one, different suits of apparel, with which changes might be frequently made, both for delight and refreshment; and may have regard to the several garments of believers in

Christ, of all good men, partakers of the grace of God: they have the garment of an outward holy conversation, which they are to watch and keep, lest they walk naked; and which, as it is often spotted with sin, they wash and make white in the blood of the Lamb: and there is the integrity and faithfulness of the saints in the performance of their duty, in their several stations of life; and especially of those in public office, in the discharge of that; who, as Job, put on righteousness, and it clothes them, and judgment is as a robe and diadem to them, (~~1394~~ Job 29:14) and there is the garment of internal holiness, the new man, consisting of the various graces of the spirit, which is put on as a garment, and makes believers all glorious within; as well as their clothing is of wrought gold, the righteousness of Christ; the principal garment, called the robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation; the best robe, and wedding garment, fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness or righteousnesses of the saints, (~~698~~ Revelation 19:8) and so the Targum renders the word here, “with righteousnesses”: though, as one change of raiment, or suit of apparel, may be meant, so one sort of righteousness only may be pointed at, even the one obedience of Christ, or his justifying righteousness; which may be so called, to denote the excellency and fulness of it, being sufficient to clothe and justify all the elect of God; like raiment, this is not in the saints, but put upon them, and covers them, and keeps them warm; protects from injuries, and beautifies and adorns: this robe of righteousness Christ has wrought out for his people, and he clothes them with it; it is his gift unto them, and they receive it from him; by which they are freed from all sin and condemnation, and their persons and services are accepted with God.

Ver. 5. *And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head,* etc.] These are either the words of Jehovah the Father, who has all the angels at his command, and can order them to do what he pleases; always regards the intercession of Christ; is ever well pleased with his righteousness, and with his people, as clothed with it; and, where he gives grace, he gives more grace: a man clothed with Christ’s righteousness is upon rising ground; he is in the way to great honour and glory: or, as some think, they are the words of the Angel of the Lord, the Messiah, continued, who willed, ordered, and commanded his ministering servants to do this, that Joshua might appear agreeably to the dignity of his office, and look great, as well as clean and neat: or rather they are the words of Zechariah the prophet; and design either the inward thoughts and secret wishes of his mind; or

were an humble request of his, and was regarded; who, seeing something wanting to make Joshua a complete high priest, intercedes for it: so one saint rejoices in the restoration of another; and is so far from envying the gifts and graces of the greatest, that he wishes him more:

so they set a fair mitre upon his head; such as the high priest wore; on which was a plate of gold, and on it written “Holiness to the Lord”; and was an emblem of Christ being made sanctification to his people; (see ^{<EX04>}Exodus 28:4,36). The mitre was a garment of the high priest, a sort of covering for the head, a cap or turban: it was made of linen, and is called the linen mitre, (^{<BR04>}Leviticus 16:4) and that which Joshua might have wore before, being stained and foul, it is requested that a “fair” or “clean”^{f59} one might be set upon his head. It consisted, as the Jewish writers say^{f60}, of sixteen cubits or ells, which were rolled up in the form of a Turkish turban; and has its name in Hebrew from its being thus rolled up. The account Josephus^{f61} gives of it is, that it was

“a cap or bonnet wore on the head, not rising up in a point, nor encompassing the whole head, but put on little more than the middle of it; and is called “masnaempthes” (it should be “mitznepet”); and is formed in such a manner, as to look like a crown, made of a linen web, like a swath or roller; for it is many times rolled about and sewed;”

and with which Jerom’s account of it agrees; who says^{f62},

“the fourth sort of garment is a round cap or bonnet, such as we see painted on Ulysses, like a globe, circle, or sphere, divided in the middle, and one part set on the head: this we and the Greeks call a “tiara”; the Hebrews, “mitznepet”: it has no point at top, nor does it cover the whole head to the hair, but leaves a third part of the forehead uncovered; and so bound with a lace at the back of the head, that it cannot easily fall from it: it is made of fine linen; and is so well covered with a linen cloth, (and which also Josephus takes notice of in the above place), that no traces of the needle appear without.”

It hid the seams, and the deformity of them: both the high priest and the common priests wore mitres, as appears from (^{<EX04>}Exodus 28:4,37,39,40) and the difference between them, according to the Jewish writers^{f63}, seems chiefly to lie in the manner of rolling and wrapping them: the mitre of the

high priest was wrapped about his head, as you roll a broken limb, roll upon roll, and did not rise up to a point, but was flat on his head; but that of the common priests consisted of various folds and rolls; which gradually rose up to a point, as a nightcap, or high crowned hat. Josephus^{f64} contrary to all other writers, makes the high priest to have two mitres; for he says, he had a cap like to the former, such as all the rest of the priests had, upon which another was sewed, variegated with blue, or a violet colour; which Braunius^{f65} thinks is a mistake of his, arising from the blue lace, with which the plate of gold, that had engraven on it Holiness to the Lord, was fastened to the mitre; or else that the place is corrupted, or has been interpolated by some other hand; since this would make the high priest to have nine garments, and not eight only; but Fortunatus Scacchus^{f66} takes the passage to be genuine, and argues from it for another mitre or cap, more worthy of the high priest; and which was peculiar to him, and was very curiously wrought, and on which the celestial globe was figured; and so Josephus says^{f67}, that the cap being made of blue or hyacinth, seemed to signify heaven; for otherwise the name of God would not have been put upon it. The son of Sirach, Ecclesiasticus 45:12 speaks very highly of this covering of the high priest's head, calling it

“a crown of gold upon the mitre, wherein was engraved Holiness, an ornament of honour, a costly work, the desires of the eyes, goodly and beautiful;”

as here a fair mitre:

and clothed him with garments; priestly ones, suitable to his office, which were in all eight; which were the linen breeches; the coat of linen; an embroidered girdle; a robe of blue; an ephod of gold; a breastplate curiously wrought, in which were the Urim and Thummim; a mitre of fine linen, and a plate of pure gold on it, (^{<CR07>}Leviticus 8:7-9) and on the day of atonement he wore the four following extraordinary garments, breeches, coat, girdle, and mitre all of linen, (^{<CR04>}Leviticus 16:4)^{f68}; all which were typical of the clothing of believers by Christ, by whom they are made priests unto God: “and clothed him with garments”; priestly robes, suitable to his office:

and the Angel of the Lord stood by; to see all done according to his order; and not as a mere spectator, for he was concerned in clothing him himself; and he still stood to denote his constant care of Joshua, and his regard to him, and as having something more to say to him, as follows:

Ver. 6. *And the Angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying.*] He not only gave his word, but annexed his oath; he called as it were heaven and earth to witness; and this he did to confirm the faith of Joshua in the promises he was about to make, as well as in the blessings of grace bestowed upon him; as the pardon of his sins, the justification of his person, and acceptance with God.

Ver. 7. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts,* etc.] For this Angel was no other than the Lord of armies in heaven and in earth:

If thou wilt walk in my ways; prescribed in the word of God, moral, ceremonial, and evangelical; in Christ the grand way, and indeed the only way of salvation; and in the paths of faith, truth, righteousness, and holiness; in the ways of God's commandments, which are pleasant, and attended with peace; such a walk and conversation, and such obedience, the grace of God teaches, and obliges to:

and if thou wilt keep my charge; the things he gave in charge, all his commands and ordinances, particularly such as belonged to the priestly office and Levitical service; (see ^{<OR>}Numbers 3:7,8) all which might be expected after so many favours granted:

then thou shall also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts: preside in the temple, be governor in it, and have the care of all the courts belonging to the people and the priests, and the advantages arising from thence. The meaning is, that whereas the office of the priesthood was in disuse through the captivity, and was become contemptible through the sins of the priests, it should now be restored to its former honour and glory: to have a place in the house of God, the church, is a great honour, and still more to be a governor and ruler in it:

and I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by; either among fellow priests, or fellow saints; or rather among the angels that stood before the Angel of the Lord, and ministered to him; signifying that he should enjoy their company, be like unto them, and join in service with them in heaven, in a future state: and "walking places" among them denote the pleasures of the heavenly state, as well, as the safety and glory of it; (see ^{<ST>}Isaiah 57:2 ^{<OR>}Revelation 3:4 21:24). The Targum very agreeably paraphrases the words thus,

“and in the resurrection or quickening of the dead, I will raise or quicken thee; and I will give thee feet walking among these seraphim.”

The allusion is to those walks that were in the temple, such as Christ walked in, (⁴⁰²³John 10:23) and the pavement in Ezekiel’s temple, (³⁰⁷Ezekiel 40:17,18).

Ver. 8. *Hear now, O Joshua the high priest*, etc.] What he was about to say further concerning the bringing forth of the Messiah, the antitype of him, and of all the priests:

thou and thy fellows, that sit before thee; the Jews interpret^{f69} these of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, for whom wonders were wrought in delivering them from the fiery furnace; but rather they design the priests and the prophets, and chief men, that came up with Joshua out of the captivity; and especially the young priests that sat before him as his disciples, to be instructed by him in things belonging to the priestly office:

for they [are] men wondered at; or, “men of a sign”^{f70}, or “wonder”; typical of Christ, the great High Priest; they were “men wondered at”, as all the people of God are: they are wondered at by themselves, that God should have any love to them, any thoughts concerning them; make a covenant with them in his Son; send him to die for them; call them by his grace; make them sons and heirs of his, and at last bring them to glory: and they are wondered at by the men of the world; that they should make such a choice as they have; that they should bear afflictions with so much cheerfulness and patience; that they should be so supported under them, and even thrive and flourish amidst them. The life of a believer is all a mystery, and wonderful: and they are wondered at by the angels, as they are the chosen of God, the redeemed of the Lamb, and called from among men; and they shall be the spectators of wonderful things themselves, which they will be swallowed up in the admiration of to all eternity. The Targum paraphrases the words thus,

“for they are men worthy to have miracles wrought for them;”

and indeed, though they are not worthy, yet miracles of grace are wrought for them, and one follows:

for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH; not Zerubbabel, as some interpret it; but the Messiah, as the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases

it; and which is the sense of some other Jewish writers. Kimchi, though he interprets the Branch of Zerubbabel, yet observes there are some of their interpreters who explain it of the Messiah; and it is as if it was said, though I bring you this salvation, yet I will bring you a greater salvation than this, at the time I shall bring forth my servant the Branch: and again they interpret it of him, because the name of the Messiah is Menachem, i.e. the Comforter; and which is numerically the same with “Tzemach”, the Branch; and Aben Ezra, who first explains it the same way as Kimchi, yet adds, but many interpreters say this Branch is the Messiah: and he is called Zerubbabel, because he is of his seed, even as he is called David; and David my servant shall be their Prince for ever, (^{<372>}Ezekiel 37:25) likewise another Jewish writer, R. Abraham Seba^{f71}, understands it of the Messiah. The heathens used to call their heroes the branches of the gods; the branch of Jupiter, and the branch of Mars, etc. are frequently met with in the poets^{f72}, and perhaps taken from this name of the Messiah; who is the servant of God as Mediator, and became so by being made of a woman, and made under the law; and is a servant of God’s choosing, sending, and rewarding; the chief of whose service lay in the redemption of his people; and who was an obedient, diligent, prudent, and faithful servant. The name of “the Branch” is given him elsewhere, (^{<291D>}Isaiah 4:2 ^{<243B>}Jeremiah 23:5) and designs his descent as man, and the meanness of it; and yet his fruitfulness in himself, and to his people: the “bringing” him “forth” intends his incarnation; and shows that he existed before, and was with God, and is brought forth by him as an instance of his grace and love to men; and because this was a matter of great moment, and very wonderful, and would certainly be done, and deserved attention, the word “behold” is prefixed to it. The Septuagint render this word by *ανατολη*, “the rising sun”, or that part of the heavens where the sun rises, the east; and the Vulgate Latin version has “orientem”, “the east”: hence another Zechariah calls the Messiah “the Day spring from on high”, (^{<407B>}Luke 1:78) and one of his titles is “the Sun of righteousness”, (^{<300D>}Malachi 4:2). The eastern part of the heavens was attributed by the heathens to their gods, and reckoned their seat and abode^{f73}; and from hence the Messiah came, that man from heaven; he was born in the eastern part of the world. Some render the words, in (^{<308D>}Micah 5:2), “his goings forth are out of the east”^{f74}; and it was from the mount of Olives, which was to the east of Jerusalem, that he went up to heaven; and from the same point of the heavens will he come again, since his feet will stand on that mountain, (^{<401B>}Acts 1:11,12 ^{<384D>}Zechariah 14:4) he is the Angel said to ascend from the east,

(~~1012~~ Revelation 7:2) and perhaps it is owing to this version of the word here, and elsewhere, when used of the Messiah, that he came to be known among the Gentiles by this name; to which it is thought Tacitus^{f75} has respect, when he says,

“many were persuaded that in the ancient books of the priests were contained a “prophecy”, that at that time “Oriens”, or the east, should prevail;”

that is, such an one should exist, or rule in the world, whose name is “Oriens”, or the rising sun.

Ver. 9. *For, behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua*, etc.] Not the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; nor the first and foundation stone of the temple laid by him in the presence of Joshua; but Christ the Stone of Israel, whom the builders refused, the foundation and corner stone of the spiritual building the church: and this was laid before Joshua to build his faith upon, to view his safety and security on it, and to take comfort from it for himself; and to lay it before others, and instruct them in the nature and use of it, for their comfort also. It was prophetically laid before him in the prophecies of Christ, that went before; and typically, when the foundation of the temple was laid, (~~1389~~ Ezra 3:9,10) the temple being a type of the church, and the foundation of it a type of Christ: and this being done by Jehovah, shows that he is the chief builder; that this stone must be an excellent one, that is of his laying; that that building must stand, which this is the foundation of; and that under builders have great encouragement to work; (see ~~2386~~ Isaiah 28:16). Vitringa, on the place referred to, interprets Joshua of Isaiah, who prophesied of this stone in the said place, and before whom it was laid by a spirit of prophecy; Isaiah and Joshua being words of the same signification and formation: but Isaiah was no high priest; for there is no room to think that Joshua, in this verse, is another and distinct from Joshua the high priest, in the former:

upon one stone [shall be] seven eyes; meaning either the eyes of Christ himself, which he has, and are in him; for Christ is not only a Living Stone, but a seeing one, even all seeing; he is all eye. This may be an allusion to such stones that have the resemblance of eyes upon them: such a stone is that which Scheuchzer^{f76} speaks of, and calls “siliculus ommatias”, being found in the river Sila; which represents the fore part of the bulb of the eye, and the black pupil of the eye in a snowy white; and, after a small interstice, as surrounded with another black circle; with which may be

compared the “achates”, in the middle of which is an onyx, resembling an eye, and is therefore named by Velschius^{f77}, “achates ommatias”, and “onych ophthalmos”. Some stones have on them the figures of the eyes of animals, and have their names from them; as the “oegophthalmos”, which is very much like the eye of a goat; and “lycophthalmos”, in the middle of which the black is surrounded with white, as the eyes of wolves, and in all respects like unto them; and “hyophthalmos”, which bears the likeness of the eyes of swine: and some resemble human eyes; there is one called “triphthalmos”, which is bred with the onyx, and represents three eyes of a man together; all which are made mention of by Pliny^{f78}: but here is a stone with seven eyes in it, denoting perfection of sight in him as a divine Person, special oversight of his people, and fulness of grace in him as Mediator; for the fulness of the gifts and graces of the Spirit in him, for the use of his people, is signified by seven eyes, (~~cf~~ Revelation 5:6) they may design the omniscience of Christ in general, which reaches to all persons and things, and greatly qualifies him to be the Head of the church, and Judge of the world; and likewise his special knowledge, care, and watchfulness of his own people, from everlasting, in time, at, and before, and after conversion, under all their trials and exercises: or they design the eyes which are looking to him, and are intent on him; and the sense is, that all eyes are upon him: the eyes of God the Father were upon him in the council and covenant of peace, and under the Old Testament, as the surety of his people, to make satisfaction for them; and, when the fulness of time was come, to send him forth; and during his infancy, and throughout his life, to preserve him; and in the whole of his humiliation, sufferings, and death, his eye was on him with pleasure and satisfaction; and when in the grave to raise him up; and now in heaven, for the acceptance of his people: the eyes of the Holy Spirit are on him, to take of his things, and show them to his people: the eyes of angels are upon him, in point of dependence, service, and worship; their eyes were upon him when here on earth, as he ascended to heaven, and now he is there; the eyes of all the saints, under the Old Testament, were upon him, expecting him, and looking to his person, and to his blood and sacrifice, that were to be offered; the eyes of all believers, under the New Testament, in all times and places, are to him for pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation; and the eyes of all, good and bad, will be fastened on him, when he comes a second time, in the clouds of heaven; and the eyes of all the glorified ones will be upon him to all eternity, beholding his glory; to this sense agrees the Targum, which renders the words, “upon one stone, seven eyes look to it”. R. Joseph

Kimchi interprets these eyes of seven men, Joshua, Ezra, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and the three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi:

behold, I will engrave the engraving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts: either with the names of his elect, which are not only written in the book of the Lamb; but their persons are put into his hands, and engraven there; and are bore upon his shoulders, he having the care and government of them; and are upon his breastplate, and on his heart, he being their representative, and presenting them for a memorial before the Lord; as the names of the tribes of Israel were on the stones, on the shoulders, and on the breastplate of the high priest; in all which Jehovah is concerned: or else with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, like a carved or polished stone; his human body was prepared and formed by him, and his human soul was filled with him; and he, as Mediator, was full of grace and truth; which is one branch of his glory, and draws the eyes of believers to him: or these engravings may intend the sufferings of Christ; the wounds and marks in his flesh; or, the “openings”^{f79}, in his feet, hands, and side, as it may be rendered; the incisions and cuts made there by the nails and spear; which were according to the determination, will, and pleasure of God; according to his purposing and commanding will, which Christ was obedient to; and are pleasing to God, as being the accomplishment of his counsel and covenant; satisfactory to his law and justice; what procured the salvation of his people, and brought glory to him: unless this is rather to be understood of the exaltation and glorification of his human nature in heaven; of his being beautified, adorned, and crowned with glory and honour there, and made the head stone of the corner; and indeed all these things may be included. The allusion seems to be to engraving of stones, either by nature, or by art; some have forms and figures on them, which are not engraven by art, or man’s device, but are of God, and by nature; such as those stones before mentioned, that have the resemblance of eyes upon them; and the “achates”, which was wore in the ring of Pyrrhus king of Epirus, in which were seen the nine Muses, and Apollo holding a harp; and which were not engraven by art, as Pliny^{f80} observes; but the spots of nature’s own accord were so placed, as that to each Muse its proper ensign was given: others are engraven by the art of men, as the onyx stones, which had the names of the children of Israel on them, wore on the shoulders of the high priest; by which instance it appears, that the art of engraving on precious stones is very ancient, and in which the ancients are said to excel; their engravings on agates, cornelians, and onyx, surpass anything of that kind produced by

the moderns. Pyrgoteles, in the times of Alexander, and Dioscorides, under the first Roman emperors, were the most eminent engravers we read of. This art, with other polite arts, was buried under the ruins of the Roman empire, until it was retrieved in Italy at the beginning of the fifteenth century, by two Italians; and from that time has been common enough in Europe^{f81}: but since this stone here was for building, rather the allusion is to the engraving and polishing of corner stones and frontispieces in edifices; and particularly to those costly, curious, and carved stones used and laid in the temple; (see ~~413B~~ Mark 13:1 ~~421B~~ Luke 21:5) or to the first stone laid in the foundation, in which little orbs were engraven, and medals of gold or silver put in them, bearing the name, country, and descent of the builder, and the day, year, and reign in which the structure was begun; which little orbs are thought to be called eyes, because of the orbicular form of the eye^{f82}: so Grotius thinks the engraving of the seven eyes on the stone is here referred to; which stone he takes to be the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, when the foundation of the temple was laid, (~~304D~~ Zechariah 4:10) at which time these seven eyes were caused suddenly to appear on it, and is the wonder spoken of, (~~308B~~ Zechariah 3:8):

and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day; not Judea, nor Chaldea, but Immanuel's land, the church and people of God, (~~208B~~ Isaiah 8:8) even all the elect and covenant ones, for whom Christ suffered and died, and who are laid upon this stone; their sins Jehovah removed from them to Christ their surety; and Christ, by bearing them, and the punishment of them, took them away; and God removed them, both from him and them, upon his becoming a sacrifice for them; and that wholly out of sight, so as that he never will impute them to them, nor condemn them for them; and this was all done "in one day". Jarchi, upon the text, says,

"I know not what day this is;"

but we Christians know it was the day on which Christ suffered and died, and offered himself a sacrifice for sin; by which one offering of himself, once for all, he put away sin for ever; it was all done in one day, (~~807Z~~ Hebrews 7:27 9:26,28 10:10,12,14) on the day he suffered, when he, expiring on the cross, said, "it is finished"; namely, sin, and complete salvation from it.

Ver. 10. *In that day, saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] The Gospel dispensation, which began with the incarnation, sufferings, death, and

resurrection of Christ, and still continues; called sometimes the day of salvation, the acceptable time, and year of the redeemed:

shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, and under the fig tree; which may be expressive of the desire of gracious souls after the conversion of others; they would have them come under the means of grace; and are desirous that the means might be blessed to them; that they might know Christ, and be partakers of the same grace with them; which arises from a sense they have of the blessings they share in; from a love to immortal souls, and a desire to promote the glory of God; also of the fruitfulness and plenty of the Gospel dispensation; Christ is the true vine, laden with precious fruits; from him saints have all their fruitfulness; they sit under his shadow with delight, and his fruit is sweet unto them; the provisions of his house are very excellent and precious, to which others are invited to partake of: likewise of the fellowship and communion which saints have with each other; they converse in private, join in public worship, and feast together at the Lord's table; and encourage one another so to do; all which is crowned with the presence of God, and fellowship with him: moreover, the words may suggest that peace and tranquillity enjoyed by believers under the Gospel dispensation, and that safety and security which they have in and through Christ; (see Gill on "~~300~~ Micah 4:4").