

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH 4

In this chapter are contained the vision of a golden candlestick, and of two olive trees by it, and the explanation thereof. The preparation to this vision, which is the awaking of the prophet, as of a man out of sleep, is in (~~300E~~ Zechariah 4:1). The vision of the candlestick, and olive trees, is in (~~300E~~ Zechariah 4:2,3). The candlestick is described by the matter of it, gold; and by the parts of it, its bowl, lamps, and pipes; and the olive trees by their situation; the explanation of which is at the request of the prophet, he not knowing what they meant, (~~300E~~ Zechariah 4:4,5) when it is observed to him, that this represents, under the type of Zerubbabel building the temple, the building of the Gospel church by Christ; and which is done and finished, not by might or power of man, but by the Spirit, notwithstanding all opposition, and contempt of it, to the great joy of many, who observe the grace of God, and his providential care and goodness, in it, (~~300E~~ Zechariah 4:6-10) and upon the prophet's inquiring the meaning of the two olive trees, which he was ignorant of, he is told that these are the two anointed ones that stood by the Lord of the whole earth, (~~300E~~ Zechariah 4:11-14).

Ver. 1. *And the angel that talked with me*, etc.] (see ~~300E~~ Zechariah 1:9,13): *came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep*; into which he fell, after he had had the former vision; (see ~~2708E~~ Daniel 8:18).

Ver. 2. *And said unto me, What seest thou?* etc.] That is, after he was awake, and had looked about him:

And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all [of] gold; such an one as was in the tabernacle of Moses, only with this difference; that had no bowl on the top, nor seven pipes to it, nor two olive trees on each side of it, with two pipes to them, (~~0253E~~ Exodus 25:31-37) such a candlestick was never in being, only in vision; and is an emblem of the church of Christ, into which the light of the Gospel is put by Christ, and held forth by it, and especially by its ministers; (see ~~601E~~ Revelation 1:12,13,20) for the light put into this candlestick, the church, is not the light of nature or reason, which

is “the candle of the Lord searching into the inward parts” of man; by which he may discern somewhat the being and perfections of God in his works, and of moral good and evil; but it is too dim to direct and guide him in the affair of salvation: nor the law of Moses, said to be a light, and a lamp; by which men might come to the knowledge of sin, but not of a Saviour from it: but the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, which was like a candle lighted up in the evening of the Jewish dispensation, and placed in the Christian church; and gave light, not only to the saints in Judea, but in all parts of the world, whither it has been carried; for this candlestick is portable, and has been removed from place to place; and wherever it is set, it gives light, and removes the darkness of error, infidelity, and immorality; and is useful to direct the saints in their walk and conversation, and render them more capable of working with delight and pleasure; and will blaze out more brightly in the end of the world, when it is about to be no more; and by the light of it lost sinners, like the lost piece of silver, are looked up, strayed ones are brought back, and backsliders restored; hypocrites and formalists, heretics and false teachers, and their doctrines, are discovered and detected; and saints are enlightened, comforted, and directed: and this candlestick being “all of gold” may denote the value of it; the true church of Christ, and the real members of it, are highly esteemed by Christ; the precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold, jewels, and precious stones; they are the excellent in the earth, in whom is his delight: and likewise its brightness and purity, splendour and glory; its members being possessed of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, of the pure and glorious doctrines of the Gospel, and exercising holy discipline, and living holy lives and conversations: and also the duration of it, which will be to the end of the world, the gates of hell not being able to prevail against it; and which is continued, not by might or power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord, and his grace, which is sufficient for it, and with which it is supplied; not by any natural or artificial means, but by a wonderful and uncommon manner; signified by oil not pressed from the olive by the help of man, but flowing from two olive trees, on both sides the candlestick, of itself, freely, and constantly. This candlestick may primarily respect, and may be an emblem of, the then present state of the Jewish church, when this vision was seen; and point at how it was raised up, restored, and preserved; but has a further view to the church of God, under the Gospel dispensation, unto the end of the world:

with a bowl upon the top of it; an oil vessel, or cruet, round, and large enough to hold the oil, which supplied it, and each of its lamps, whereby its light was maintained and continued; and this may intend, either the fulness of grace in Christ, which is as “a fountain”, as the word^{f83} here used signifies, (^{<6659>}Joshua 15:19) to supply his church and people; and from whence they have the oil of grace in measure, which is in him without measure, whereby their lamps are filled, and their lights are kept burning; and who is fitly placed as the Head of the church for this purpose, as this bowl was upon the top of the candlestick: or rather, since this “bowl” is but a measure, though it may be a large one it may signify that large portion of gifts and grace which is communicated to the church in all ages, and abides in it, and is severally divided to the ministers and members of it, for its profit and edification; to one one gift, to another another; to some greater, and others less; and all for mutual good; and which are given forth from Christ and his Spirit; who, as Capellus thinks, may be meant by the two olive trees, who of themselves, without pressing, having all fulness of grace in them without measure, freely and liberally impart it; and keep filling the bowl, so that there is constantly a supply of the Spirit, and grace for the church and people of Christ in all ages; according to (^{<2821>}Isaiah 59:21) “my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed saith the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever”. Cocceius thinks the merit of Christ is meant by this bowl or cup, by which he obtained the promise of the Spirit:

and his seven lamps thereon; on the candlestick; such a number of lamps were on the candlestick in the tabernacle, (^{<1257>}Exodus 25:37) and may design the many members of the church bearing the lamps of profession; or rather the ministers of the Gospel, who are the lights of the world, and bright and burning ones, that hold forth the word of life both in doctrine and conversation; unless the gifts and graces of the Spirit, qualifying them for such work, should be meant; (see ^{<6045>}Revelation 4:5) but rather ministers themselves are designed, who are called lights and lamps, (^{<4154>}Matthew 5:14 ^{<4155>}John 5:35) and the number seven, being a number of perfection, may denote a fulness and sufficiency of Gospel ministers, which Christ furnishes his church with, and will do unto the end of the world; he having a perfection of gifts in his hands for them, to fit them for his service; just as these are called the “seven pillars” of Wisdom’s house, (^{<2101>}Proverbs 9:1). Cocceius thinks by these seven lamps are intended the seven

churches, or the seven states of the church under several periods in the Gospel dispensation; the same with the seven churches of Asia, and the seven golden candlesticks, in the midst of which Christ was seen by John, (³⁰⁰⁰Revelation 1:4,11,12):

and seven pipes to the seven lamps which were upon the top thereof; these pipes, infusers or funnels, were at the bottom of the bowl, in which were so many holes, that let out the oil into them, by which it was carried to the lamps; a pipe to every lamp. In the Hebrew text it is, “seven and seven pipes”^{f84}; that is, fourteen, two to every lamp; which Fortunatus Scacchus^{f85} thinks, they being joined to one another, the one put in the neck of the other, were for the better cleansing and purifying of the oil from any dregs that might be in it. Jarchi is of opinion there were seven to every lamp, in all forty nine, but without any foundation: by these are meant, not the seven sacraments, as say the Papists; but either the various gifts of the Spirit, fitting ministers for their service; or the various means they make use of to learn the mind of Christ in the Scriptures, to know the Gospel, and more of it, that they may hold it forth to others; such as reading, meditation, and prayer.

Ver. 3. *And the two olive trees by it*, etc.] Which are explained in, (see Gill on “³⁰⁴⁴Zechariah 4:14”):

one upon the right [side] of the bowl, and the other upon the left [side] thereof; in (³⁰⁴¹Zechariah 4:11) they are said to be on the right and left sides of the bowl or candlestick, which is the same; for the situation of them was alike, with respect to the one and the other: according to Fortunatus Scacchus, these two olive trees did not arise out of the earth, and the top of the candlestick; but out of the base of the candlestick, one on the right hand of the bowl, which hung in the middle of the candlestick; and the other on the left^{f86}, of which he has given the figure.

Ver. 4. *So I answered, and spake to the angel that talked with me*, etc.]. The same that awoke him out of sleep, and asked him what he saw:

saying, What [are] these, my lord? that is, what do they signify? what do they represent? or what are they emblems of? for he knew what they were; that they were a candlestick, and two olive trees; but he was desirous of knowing what the meaning of them were.

Ver. 5. *Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me*, etc.] Either to upbraid him with his ignorance and stupidity; or rather to

quicken his attention, and that of others, to the interpretation of it he was about to give him:

Knowest thou not what these be? art thou ignorant of the design of them? or knowest thou not what is meant by them?

and I said, No, my lord; he made an ingenuous confession of his ignorance, joined with great respect unto, and veneration of, the angel that conversed with him.

Ver. 6. *Then he answered, and spake unto me, saying,* etc.] In great condescension, in order to instruct him into the true meaning of the vision:

This [is] the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel; this signifies what was said by the Lord to Zerubbabel, by some one of the prophets sent unto him:

saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts: that is, that as the candlestick was supplied with oil, from the two olive trees by the side of it, without the help of any man, to pour in the oil, and trim the lamps; so the temple should be built by Zerubbabel, not through the multitude and strength of men, but through the Spirit of God, animating, exciting, encouraging, and strengthening them to go through the work. The temple was a type of the church, and Zerubbabel a type of Christ; he was so in the high esteem he was had in by the Lord; he was chosen by him; made as a signet, and was precious to him, (^{<3023>}Haggai 2:23) in his titles and characters, a servant of the Lord, and governor of Judah, (^{<3008>}Haggai 1:1 2:23) and in his work, in bringing the Jews out of captivity, and in rebuilding the temple: so Christ is the chosen of God, and exceeding dear and precious to him; is his righteous servant, and Governor of the church, or King of saints; and who has redeemed and delivered his people from the captivity of sin, and Satan, and the law; and is the builder of his church; who has laid the foundation of it, and will bring in the headstone; and which church is built up in all generations through the conversion of sinners; and that is done, not by external force, by carnal weapons, or moral persuasion; but by the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; and not by the power of man's free will, but by the efficacious grace of the divine Spirit: it is indeed done by power and might, but not of the creature: man, whatever power he has to do things natural, civil, outwardly religious, and materially moral, or however in appearance, has no power to do anything spiritually good; not to think a good thought, nor do a good action, in a spiritual manner; much less to work such a work as the work of

regeneration, conversion, and sanctification; since he is dead in sin, and can not quicken himself; his understanding is darkened, yea, darkness itself, and he can not command light into it; his will is stubborn and obstinate, and he can not bend it, and subdue it; his heart is hard as a nether millstone, and he cannot soften it, and repent of his sins, in a truly spiritual, gracious, anti-evangelic manner; his affections are inordinate; and he is a lover of sinful pleasures, and not of God, nor of anything divine, to which his carnal mind is enmity; he cannot believe in Christ of himself; faith is not of himself, it is the gift of God, and so is repentance, and every other grace. The work of grace on the soul is expressed by a regeneration, a resurrection from the dead, a creation, and the new man, or a transformation of a man into another man; all which require almighty power to effect: regeneration is not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God, of Jehovah the Spirit: sanctification is called the sanctification of the Spirit, and every grace of it is a fruit of his; it is he who is the Spirit of life from Christ, that quickens men when dead in trespasses and sins, and enlightens their dark minds with spiritual light, in divine things; it is he that produces evangelical repentance in them, and faith in Christ is of his operation; it is he that begins the work of grace on the heart, and carries it on, and causes to abound in the exercise of every grace, and performs the work of faith with power. The Targum, instead of “by my Spirit”, renders it “by my Word”.

Ver. 7. *Who art thou, O great mountain?* etc.] This is said in reference to those who opposed the building of the temple, as Sanballat, and others; or the Persian monarchy, and Babylon the capital of it; a mountain being a symbol of a kingdom, or capital city; so Babylon is called, (⁻³⁶¹²⁵⁻Jeremiah 51:25) hence the Targum paraphrases the words thus,

“how art thou accounted a foolish kingdom before Zerubbabel!”

and may denote the opposition made to Christ, and to the building of his church, both by Rome Pagan and Rome Papal; Rome is signified by a burning mountain cast into the sea, (⁻⁶⁸⁸⁻Revelation 8:8) and may include all the enemies of the church and people of God, as sin, Satan, and the world; who, though they may look like high and great mountains, and make much opposition, and throw many difficulties in their way, yet in the issue will be of no avail; (see Gill on “⁻²³⁹¹¹⁻Isaiah 49:11”). Some Jewish writers^{f87}, by “the great mountain”, understand the Messiah, but very wrongly; for he is designed by Zerubbabel in the next clause; but not by the “headstone”, as the Targum interprets it:

before Zerubbabel [thou shall become] a plain; as all opposition and difficulties were surmounted by Zerubbabel in building the temple; so all vanish and disappear before Christ, the antitype of Zerubbabel, in the building up of his church, through the conversion of sinners, and in the protection and preservation of it:

and he shall bring forth the headstone [thereof]; that is, he, Zerubbabel, shall finish the building of the temple, as in (~~3049~~ Zechariah 4:9) the headstone being the last and uppermost stone in the building, which is last laid, and completes the whole; and in the spiritual sense designs, not Christ the headstone of the corner, for it is he that is Zerubbabel's antitype, who brings it in; but the last man that will be converted, when the number of God's elect will be completed in regeneration: they are all in Christ's hands, and under his care; before conversion they are secretly his, his hidden ones; in conversion he brings them forth, and makes them to appear what they are; and, when the last of this number is born again, the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, will be wholly built, and nothing wanting in it; and the work of grace will have the last hand put to it, and be perfect in all. Christ is indeed sometimes called the headstone of the corner, and the chief cornerstone, (~~1882~~ Psalm 118:22 ~~4171~~ Ephesians 2:20) and he is the principal one in the spiritual building the church; he is the foundation stone, on which the whole is laid; and he is the cornerstone, that joins, knits, and keeps all together; he is both the stability, safety, and ornament of the building; Christ is the first, but not the last stone laid, which this must be: rather the perfection of grace is designed, or the bringing of the work of God to perfection; which may be signified hereby, in allusion to an edifice, which, when the last or top stone is laid, is then completed; and, if taken in this sense, must be understood, not of justifying grace, which is complete at once; Christ's righteousness being a perfect justifying righteousness, and every believer complete in it; but of sanctifying grace, which, though, as to the principle of it, is all wrought together, yet is not at once perfected; it is gradually brought to perfection; there is a perfection of parts, but not of degrees; no man is perfectly holy in himself, only as he is in Christ; but holiness in the saint will be perfected, for without it no man can see the Lord; and this is done at death in every individual believer; and then follows a state of sinless perfection; and the last measure of grace given, which perfects the work, may be called the headstone, the crowning, finishing part: and this wilt be brought in by Christ, the author and finisher of faith; who is a rock, and his work is

perfect; he is able to do it; and who so fit, as he who is full of grace? and who so proper, as the master builder, and Head of the church? this grace, which perfects all, is in Christ; he brings it out from himself, in whom it has pleased the Father all fulness should dwell: but it is best of all to interpret the headstone of the last of the elect of God, and redeemed of the Lamb, that will be called by grace; who has this name, not from any superior excellency in him to any of the other lively stones, laid in the spiritual building; but because he is the last that is put there; and which shows, that not one of those God has chosen, and Christ has redeemed, shall be lost; it is the will of God, and it is the care of Christ, that none should perish, but all should come to repentance, to the glory of his rich grace; or otherwise the building would not be complete, nor the church the fulness of him that filleth all in all. The Targum indeed paraphrases the words of Christ,

“and he shall reveal his Christ, whose name is said from eternity, and he shall rule over all kingdoms:”

and mention being made of a capital and principal stone, in this vision of the candlestick, may put one in mind of the stone the Jews^{f88} speak of, which was before the candlestick in the temple, which had three steps, and on which the priest stood, and trimmed the lamps: and this will be attended

[with] shoutings, [crying], Grace, grace unto it; as the people of the Jews shouted, when the first stone was laid in the foundation of the temple, (^{<15811>}Ezra 3:11-13) so it is here intimated that their acclamations would be very great when the last stone would be brought in, and the building finished; which they would ascribe to the grace, favour, and good will of God to them: so likewise, as the work of conversion is wholly owing to the grace of God, an abundance of which is displayed in it; when it is finished in the hearts of all the Lord’s people, and the last man designed to be called by it is converted, and so the spiritual building of the church finished; this will be attended with the shouts of angels, who rejoice at the conversion of every sinner, and much more when all the elect are gathered in; and the acclamations of all the saints, for the marriage of the Lamb, will now be come, and the church be ready, as a bride prepared for her husband; (see ^{<6916>}Revelation 19:6-8 21:2,3). The repetition of the phrase, “grace, grace”, denotes that the work of conversion in all the saints, from the first to the last, is only owing to the grace of God, and not to any merit, motive, and condition in man; that they are saved and called, not according to their works, but according to the purpose and grace of God, his abundant

mercy, free favour, and great love; and that this grace is exceeding abundant, which is displayed in the conversion of a single individual; and how large and copious must it be, which is given forth to them all. It is also expressive of the vehemency of those that use the phrase; and shows that they have a deep sense of it on their hearts; and are warmed, and glow with it; and cannot sufficiently express their admiration of it; and strive to magnify it to the uttermost of their power, being sensible of their obligations to God for it, and what gratitude is due to him on account of it: and this will be the cry of every saint in glory, throughout the endless ages of eternity; nor will the least sound be heard that is jarring, or contrary to it; all will be of one mind, and in one tone, and strive to outdo each other in exalting the free grace of God in the highest strains, with the greatest fervency of soul, and with the loudest acclamations, and those continually repeated.

Ver. 8. *Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying.*] As follows; which is a confirmation of the angel's interpretation of the vision.

Ver. 9. *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house,* etc.] The temple at Jerusalem, which was laid, or however renewed, after it had been long neglected, even the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, two months before this vision and prophecy, (^{<3028>}Haggai 2:18) compared with (^{<3007>}Zechariah 1:7):

his hands shall also finish it: signified by bringing in the head or top stone, (^{<3007>}Zechariah 4:7) and so Christ our great Zerubbabel has laid the foundation of his church, which is no other than himself; and is a foundation firm and strong, sure and certain, immovable and everlasting; and his hands will finish the building of it, by bringing and laying every elect soul upon this foundation; which may be concluded from his hands being those which have laid the foundations of the heavens and the earth; uphold all things in being, and hold the reins of government; and who, as Mediator, has all the persons of his people in his hands, and all grace and glory for them: his hands also have laid the foundation of grace in the hearts of his people, and he will finish it; he, who is the author, will be the finisher of faith:

and thou shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you; this clause is not an address to Zerubbabel, as Aben Ezra and others think; but to the people of the Jews, as appears from the plural word used, at the end

of it; nor are the words spoken by the prophet of himself; though the Targum paraphrases them to this sense,

“and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me to prophesy unto you;”

that is, when they should see his prophecies accomplished, and the temple built, then they would know and acknowledge that he was a true prophet, sent of God unto them; nor is the angel designed, so often mentioned, that talked with the prophet; for he was sent, not to the Jews, but to him; but they are spoken by the Messiah, called “the Word of the Lord”; (~~301B~~ Zechariah 4:8) who, when he shall have finished the work of grace on every man’s heart by his Spirit, and shall have completed the whole Gospel building, the church, by gathering in everyone of the elect; then it shall be known and owned by all, both the converted Jews and Gentiles, that he is the true Messiah, the sent of God to the forefathers of the Jews, who came to preach the Gospel to them, work miracles among them, and obtain eternal redemption for men.

Ver. 10. *For who hath despised the day of small things?* etc.] This literally refers to the building of the second temple, which was contemptible to the enemies of Judah, Sanballat, and others; and little in the eyes of many of the Jews themselves, who had seen the former temple; yet not in the eyes of the Lord of hosts, (~~451B2~~ Ezra 3:12 ~~370B~~ Haggai 2:3,6-9) and so the Targum paraphrases the words,

“for who is he that despiseth this day, because the building is small?”

but in the spiritual sense, to the building up of the church by conversion: the first work of conversion may be called day “of small things” to men; it may be called a “day”, because a time of light into themselves, their sin and danger, and the way from it; the day of Christ’s power upon the soul, in making it willing to quit all, and be saved by him; a season in which there is a display of the love, grace, and mercy of God unto it; and is the day of its espousals to Christ; and the day of salvation, of the knowledge and application of it; and of good tidings, of peace, pardons, and life, by Christ; and yet a day of “small things”: not that what is done or made known are small things in themselves; but the light and knowledge which young converts have of themselves, of Christ, and of the doctrines of the Gospel, is but small; and so is their faith in Christ, but a mere venture on him, or a

peradventure there may be salvation in him for them also; and their spiritual strength to exercise grace, do their duty, comfort from Christ, and in the promises and experience of the everlasting love of God, are but small at first; yet this day of small things is not to be “despised”: it is not by Jehovah the Father, who regards their prayers, and does not despise them, though like the chatterings of a crane or swallow; he takes them by the hand, leads them, and teaches them to walk by faith, and proportions their duty to their strength, and their strength to their day: nor by Jesus Christ, who delights in their applications to him, and never rejects them; regards his buds in his vineyards, the beginnings of grace; the lambs in his flock, the weak and feeble; and the bruised reed, and smoking flax, who have but little light and grace: nor by the Holy Spirit, who helps their infirmities, makes intercession for them with groans unutterable; carries on the good work in them, and performs it till the day of Christ: nor should it be despised by men of greater light, faith, and experience; though it is no wonder they should be despised by carnal men; but even for them to despise one of the little ones that believe in him is resented by him. The interest of Christ in general is sometimes “a day of small things”: it was so among the Jews at the time of Christ’s ascension; and among the Gentiles, at the first preaching of the Gospel to them; and so it was at the time of the Reformation, and is so now: Jacob is small, but there is a day coming, called the great day of Jezreel, (^{<3011>}Hosea 1:11).

For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel [with] those seven: which may literally respect the building of the second temple; and that was expressed not only at the laying of the foundation, (^{<3581>}Ezra 3:11-13) but at the carrying of it on, and especially at the finishing of it, (^{<3584>}Ezra 6:14-16) when they saw the building rise under, the direction and encouragement of Zerubbabel, who is represented here as a master builder, with a “plummet” in his hand; which is an instrument used by masons and carpenters, to draw perpendicular lines with, in order to judge whether the building is upright; and is so called from a piece of lead fastened at the end of a cord or thread. In the Hebrew text it is called a “stone of tin”^{<389>}; it may be, in those times, they used a stone for this purpose, cased with tin or lead. And, “those seven” with him may mean seven principal persons that joined with him, and assisted him in this work: though some interpret them of the seven lamps, and the seven pipes to them, in the candlestick; and the Targum explains them of “seven rows of stone”, measured by the plummet: but rather they are to be understood of

the eyes of the Lord, after mentioned, which were upon the Jews, in favour of the building, that it might not be caused to cease by their enemies, (^{<1518>}Ezra 5:5) though Cocceius chooses to render the words thus, “and those seven shall rejoice, and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel”; and applies them to the seven churches of Asia, representatives of the whole church of Christ, in successive periods, rejoicing at the growing interest of Christ; and doubtless the mystical and spiritual sense of the words is, that it is matter of rejoicing to gracious souls when the spiritual building goes forward, under the direction and encouragement of Christ. The carrying on of the work of grace in particular believers affords joy and pleasure. This work is in the hands and under the care of Christ; it is curiously wrought and framed by line and rule, and goes on to perfection; which being observed by others, though it is the nature of grace to desire more, yet it does not envy the gifts and graces of others, but rejoices at them. The carrying on of the work of God in the church in general is an occasion of great joy to the saints; they rejoice that it is in such hands; not in the hands of ministers or magistrates, or even angels, but in the hands of Christ; who is so great, and has condescended to engage in it; has so much wisdom to manage and conduct it; is so faithful in everything he is concerned, and is so able to go through with it: they rejoice that it is carried on with so much exactness; that the whole building is so fitly framed and compacted together; everything in the church being done according to the plummet of God’s everlasting love and eternal purposes, which plummet is with Christ, (^{<1819>}Romans 8:39 ^{<1811>}Ephesians 3:11) according to which persons are called by grace; the blessings of grace are bestowed on them; and they are put in such an office or place in the church: and as this building goes on by an increase of persons, or an addition of such as shall be saved; and by an increase of grace, gifts, and spiritual knowledge in them; it is matter of joy to angels and men, and especially to the ministers of the Gospel.

They [are] the eyes of the Lord, or “the eyes of the Lord are they”¹⁹⁰,

which run to and fro through the whole earth; these design not the angels, who walk to and fro through the earth, (^{<3017>}Zechariah 6:7) nor the various gifts and graces of the Spirit, (^{<1816>}Revelation 5:6) but rather the infinite providence of God, signified by an “eye”; it being intuitive, omniscient, approbative of that which is good, and vindictive of that which is evil; loving to, and careful of, the saints, making them prosperous and successful: and by “seven eyes”, to denote the perfection and fulness of it;

and these being said to run to and fro throughout the earth, expresses the large compass of persons and things it reaches to: and it may be observed, that the carrying on of the work of God, both in particular persons, and in the church of God in general, is attended with and owing to his special providence, as well as grace.

Ver. 11. *Then answered I, and said unto him,* etc.] To the angel that talked with him, (^{<304>}Zechariah 4:1,4,5):

What [are] these two olive trees upon the right [side] of the candlestick, and upon the [left] side thereof? in (^{<304>}Zechariah 4:2) they are said to be on each side of the bowl. The mystery of the candlestick being explained to Zechariah by the angel, the prophet desires to know the meaning of the two olive trees that were on the right and left of it, one on one side, and the other on the other side.

Ver. 12. *And I answered again, and said unto him,* etc.] Before he could have an answer to the former question, he puts the following, as being of the same import:

What [be these] two olive branches; which grew upon the olive trees, and were nearest to the candlestick, and the pipes that were to the lamps: these, in (^{<304>}Zechariah 4:14), are interpreted of the two anointed ones, or sons of oil, and may design the ministers of the word, if, by the “golden oil” after mentioned, is meant the Gospel; even a set of evangelical preachers in Gospel times, in the various periods of the church; Christ’s faithful witnesses, who stand on each side of the bowl, and receive out of Christ’s fulness gifts and grace to fit them for their work; and on each side of the candlestick, the church, to impart the oil of the Gospel to it. These may be compared to “olive trees” for their beauty and comeliness in the eyes of saints, to whom they bring the good news of salvation by Christ, (^{<346>}Hosea 14:6) and for their greenness and flourishing condition, being filled with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, (^{<358>}Psalms 52:8) and for their fruitfulness; for, as the olive tree produces an oil used both for light and food, so they bring the Gospel with them, which is the means of spiritual light, and contains in it refreshing and delightful food, (^{<388>}Deuteronomy 8:8) and for their fatness, with which they honour God and men, (^{<399>}Judges 9:9) so ministers of the Gospel honour Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, by ascribing the contrivance, obtaining, and application of salvation to each of them; and they honour men, by acquainting them what honour all the saints have through Christ, being made kings and priests by

him; and by showing them what honour they shall have hereafter. And they may be compared to “olive branches”, with respect to Christ the good olive tree, in whom they are as branches; are bore by him, and subsist in him; receive all they have from him, and do all they do in his strength: and also for their tenderness and weakness in themselves, and for their fruitfulness from him.

Which through the two golden pipes empty the golden [oil] out of themselves? if by the “two” olive trees and branches, or anointed ones, ministers of the Gospel are intended; then, by the “golden oil”, is meant, not the Spirit and his grace, which is sometimes compared to oil; nor inward spiritual joy and peace, the oil of gladness, for ministers cannot communicate either of these to others; but the Gospel, and the precious truths of it, compared to “oil”, because of a healing, cheering, and refreshing nature; and because beautifying, feeding, and fattening; and because of a searching and penetrating nature, and being pure, unmixed, and good for light: and to “golden” oil, or oil, that, being poured out, is like liquid gold, for colour, value, splendour, purity, and duration: and this they “empty out”; which phrase denotes the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel they come with; their free and ready delivery of it; their faithfulness in giving out all, and keeping back nothing that may be profitable; and their ease and satisfaction of mind in so doing and this they do, not out of the corrupt fountains of moral philosophy; nor from the writings of others; nor out of their own heads, or from mere notional knowledge; but out of their hearts, and from their inward experience of Gospel truths; and which is not to be understood exclusive of Christ, or of the Scriptures of truth, from whence they fetch all truth; nor have they this knowledge and experience of or from themselves. The means by which they communicate the golden oil of the Gospel are “the two golden pipes”, the ministry of the word, and administration of ordinances; which are like “pipes” or canals, through which Gospel grace is conveyed; and are “golden”, are valuable, to be kept pure, and are durable; they are but “pipes”, or means, and not to be depended on, yet they are “golden”, and not to be despised. But if by the two olive trees, or anointed ones, are meant two divine Persons, of which (see ~~3044~~ Zechariah 4:14) then by the “golden oil” may be intended the grace of God, often compared to “oil” in Scripture, in allusion to oil in common, or to the anointing oil, which was made of precious spices; or rather, as here, to the lamp oil for the candlestick in the tabernacle, which was pure oil olive: grace, like oil, is of a cheering and refreshing nature, hence called

“oil of gladness”; very beautifying and adorning; like oil, it makes the face to shine; and by it the church, and all believers, become “all glorious within”: it is of a searching nature; like oil, it penetrates into the heart, and has its seat there; and as oil will not mix with other liquid, so neither will grace with sin and corruption: but chiefly, as here, may it be compared to oil olive, because it burns and gives light, as that does in the lamp. The lamp of a profession, without the oil of grace, is a dark and useless thing. Grace is a light in the inward parts, and causes the light of an outward conversation to shine in good works before men; and this may be truly called “golden”, being exceeding valuable, yea, much more precious than gold that perisheth; it being as durable, nay, much more durable than that, for it will last for ever, and can never be lost; (see [1 Peter 1:7](#) [Revelation 3:18](#)) and of this the word and ordinances are the means; and so may be designed by the pipes, through which it is conveyed to the souls of men; for “faith”, and other graces of the Spirit, “come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”, ([Romans 10:17](#)) hence says the apostle to the Galatians, ([Galatians 3:2](#)), “received ye the Spirit”; that is, the special gifts and graces of the Spirit, comparable to the best oil and purest gold; “by the works of the law”, or through the preaching of that, through the doctrine of justification by the works of it, “or by the hearing of faith?” by the doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, or by the Gospel preached and heard: this is the usual way in which the Spirit and his grace are communicated to men; hence the Gospel is called the “Spirit”, and “the ministration of the Spirit”, ([2 Corinthians 3:6,8](#)) and this seems to be a further confirmation of this sense of the words, since this golden oil is distinct from the pipes through which it flows; as grace is from the Gospel, through which it is received; whereas, in the other sense, they seem to coincide.

Ver. 13. *And he answered me, and said,* etc.] That is, the angel answered to the prophet’s questions:

Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord; (see Gill on [Zechariah 4:5](#)”).

Ver. 14. *Then said he, These [are] the two anointed ones,* etc.] Or “sons of oil”^{f91}. Some think the gifts and graces of the Spirit are meant, which come from the God of all grace, remain with Christ, are given freely by him to the sons of God, and are always for the service of the church, and sufficient for it; others, Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. Christ

is the anointed One, or son of oil, being anointed with the Holy Ghost to the office of Prophet, Priest, and King; and with which oil he has supplied his candlestick, the church, in all ages. The Holy Spirit is the oil of gladness, and that anointing which teacheth all things. And this is the sense of Capellus, as has been observed on (~~3012~~ Zechariah 4:2). And the learned and judicious Pemble makes a “query” of it, whether Christ and the Comforter; or Christ in his two natures; or Christ in his two offices of King and Priest of his church; or how else the words are to be understood: and this was the sense of Origen long ago, though censured by Jerom; it may be the rather, because he interprets the candlestick of the Father. But these epithets, “anointed ones”, and “sons of oil”, are very suitable to them; the one being called the Messiah, or anointed; and the other the unction, and the oil of gladness: and indeed, if by the golden oil emptied out of them is meant the grace of God, as it frequently signifies in Scripture, no other can be meant; since they are the inexhaustible fountain of all grace and gifts to the church in all ages, whereby it is supplied and supported; and may be said to “stand before the Lord of the whole earth”, God the Father; who does not immediately by himself administer to the church, but by Christ the Head of it; and Christ communicates by his Spirit, whom he sends from himself, and from the Father: and the rather they may be thought to be meant, since the ministers of the word seem to be designed by the seven lamps which receive the oil, or gifts and graces of the Spirit, fitting them for their work, from the bowl on the top of the candlestick, which is supplied with it from these two olive trees; and therefore must be distinct from them, or otherwise they will be said to be supplied from themselves: though, whereas both Christ and the Spirit communicate by the word and the ordinances, administered by the faithful dispensers of the word; hence those witnesses of Christ, in all ages, may with propriety enough be called two anointed ones, and “the two olive trees”, as they are in (~~6104~~ Revelation 11:4) where there is a plain allusion to this passage. The Targum renders the words, “these are the two sons of princes”, or “great men”. Some Jewish writers interpret them of their two Messiahs, Messiah ben Joseph, and Messiah ben David^{f92}. Some interpreters understand by them Enoch and Elias; others Peter and Paul; others, better, with Kimchi and Ben Melech, Joshua and Zerubbabel, the one anointed for the priesthood, and the other for the kingdom; of which two offices Jarchi interprets them; and others the two churches, Jewish and Christian.

That stand by the Lord of the whole earth; the Creator and Governor of the universe: ministers of the word are on his side, abide by his truths and ordinances, and are faithful to his cause and interest: or, “before the Lord of the whole earth”^{f93}; they are his ministers, and serve him; they “stand”, as it becomes them, which shows their work is not done; and that it is the Lord’s work they are engaged in; and that they continue and persevere in it: likewise it shows that they are under his eye, notice, dispose, care, and protection; that they are in his favour, and enjoy his presence. How this may be applied to the two divine Persons standing by or before God the Father has been before observed, and to be understood of them as in their office capacity.