

## ISAIAH 4

- We start at verse 2 because verse 1 belongs to the preceding thought.

**2 In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.**

**3 It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.**

**4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning,**

**5 then the Lord will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.**

**6 There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.**

**2 In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.**

- In that day – [בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא] In what day? In the special and notable day that Isaiah is much interested that we know about: In chapter 2:11-12 Isaiah first said

The proud look of man will be abased, and the loftiness of man will be humbled,

And the Lord alone will be exalted **in that day**, for **the Lord of hosts will have a day**

- This initial statement sums up everything Isaiah says later about this day.

This is the day Joel calls “the great and terrible day of the Lord” יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַיּוֹרָא

This is the day Jesus calls “the great tribulation” (Matt 24:21-22) when God will remove unrighteousness, and restore righteousness, to Israel and by implication, the whole earth.

- What will happen on that day? ...the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious. So this is the other aspect of “the day” – though it is terrible, it will establish something extremely good.

- What is “the branch of the Lord”?

In English versions of Isaiah the one word “branch” is used to translate 3 different Hebrew words: tsemach, netzer and kippah. The first two words here are used metaphorically in various passages to describe something other than a simple branch. For example:

### 1. צֶמַח [tsemach]

- Jer 23:5 “Behold, *the* days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David **a righteous Branch**; And He will reign as king and act wisely, and do justice and righteousness in the land...”
- Jer 33:15-16 ‘In those days and at that time I will cause a **righteous Branch of David** to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.’
- Zech 3:8 “I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.”

- Zec 6:12–13 “Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, a man **whose name is Branch**, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honour and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.” ’

## 2. נֶצֶר [netser]

- 11:1 Then a shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse, and **a branch from his roots** will bear fruit. (The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him etc...)

From these verses, we understand that in God’s mind, the idea of a branch somehow fits the idea of who Messiah is. Why does God use the word-picture of a branch to describe Messiah? Perhaps because, even though it seems a very common and unsophisticated way to point to Messiah, even the smallest child knows what a branch is. There are certainly several things about a branch that powerfully communicate deep truths about Jesus.

1. Above all else, a branch must **have strength**. It must reach out and bear the weight of the perimeter of the tree, even as it grows, without resting or breaking, all the day, all the year, in heat and cold and storm. In season it must patiently and unflinchingly channel life through itself to the flower, then the bud and then in the long wait of summer, to the fruit. So Jesus came to earth, “at just the right time”, and laboured for three years in the field of His Father, in circumstances that were increasingly trying; he was strained to breaking point at Gethsemane, but setting his face like flint, and finally proved strong, and fulfilled the charge that would bring many sons to glory. He was like a branch.

2. Branches are **of the earth**, growing everywhere out of the dirt. Branches are also exceedingly **common** – how many branches would exist in even a small forest? So, is it not a bit surprising to hear scripture speak of a unique (*the*) singular branch, the brance of Jehovah, describing it in such exalted terms. But we understand that Jehovah entered into a human family line, and took on himself the clay of human flesh. The Jewish religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, saying you are “only a man” (John 10:33), but Pilate the pagan unbeliever got it right without thinking when he said “Behold, the man.” Jesus was a unique God-man among us, among the countless masses of humanity, so we can see the branch as a fitting allusion to the humanity of Messiah.

3. A branch has **no voice** of its own, **nor can it claim glory or beauty** for itself. A tree or vine is planted for its fruit, not its branches. People do not plant fruit trees to praise the branches; rather, their attention and expectation is all on the fruit. But if a branch were a person, it would be the perfect picture of **a servant** meekly serving the whole tree, going humbly and without notice about its vital business of conveying life from the root to the fruit. And this is exactly what Messiah was, the servant of God, the one who came humbly, not to be served, but to serve, and who as the branch brought the life of God from the place of blessing to the outermost lost sheep of Israel.

To return to the verse before us:

### **In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious**

I have said a branch cannot claim beauty or glory to itself. But in the day of wrath and tribulation, as Messiah completely removes the workings of evil from the earth, Messiah, the branch, will truly be beautiful and glorious. Jesus will be recognised as beautiful and

glorious in all the earth. Beauty here refers more particularly of desirability, meaning the honour which has always been due to Messiah will be accepted, rather than rejected.

**and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel**

**The fruit of the earth** here is in parallel with **the branch of the Lord**, and so refers to Messiah himself. Messiah will become the pride of Israel, literally, their exaltation, and her particular adorning identity. Hosea would say Israel has left behind the time of being called “Lo Ammi” – not my people – and “Lo Ruchamah” – without compassion, entered the

I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,

And I will say to those who were not My people,

‘You are My people!’

And they will say, ‘*You are my God!*’ ” (2:23)

• who are **the survivors of Israel**? Just that. Isaiah indicates plainly here that by the end of the tribulation, Israelite loss of life, especially among men, will be extraordinary. See 4 verse 1:

For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, “We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!”

These women are saying, in other words, “just marry us, we won’t demand that you care for us, just give us the honour of a name and children.” Zechariah 13:8 indicates that at this time only one third of the entire population of Israel will remain:

“It will come about in all the land,” declares the Lord, “That two parts in it will be cut off *and* perish; but the third will be left in it.”

•The idea of a surviving remnant continues in the next verse: **It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.** Isaiah speaks of this elsewhere (62:12):

And they will call them, “The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord”; and you will be called, “Sought out, a city not forsaken.”

• When will this happen? **When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst.** The reference recalls the haughty women of Jerusalem described in full detail in the last chapter.

• It is the role of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to our own true condition, to how we are seen in God’s eyes. The role of the Holy Spirit is given in the cleansing here, which is **by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.** This is the promised outpouring spoken of through Zechariah (12:10) when he promises:

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

• When this takes place, God will bring about a magnificent phenomenon:

He will **create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.** “Canopy” here is “choopah” – the word for bridal canopy or chamber. There is a beautiful significance here, the choopah showing Israel restored to her place as the now faithful wife of Jehovah. The constant protection from the elements will be a represent God’s constant careful attention, as Hosea (3:5) describes,

Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days.