

## CHAPTER FOUR

## 4. THE VICTORY OF THE CLEANSED 4:2-6

TEXT: 4:2-6

- 2 In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.
- 3 And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem;
- 4 when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of justice and by the spirit of burning.
- 5 And Jehovah will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory shall be spread a covering.
- 6 And there shall be a pavilion for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain.

## QUERIES

- a. Who is the "branch" of Jehovah?
- b. Why is Jehovah going to create a "cloud" and a "flaming fire" over Zion?
- c. What is the pavilion?

## PARAPHRASE

In those latter days when the glorious future of the mountain of the house of the Lord comes to pass, the Messiah, the Branch

of the house of David, will bring God's people their true beauty and glory; this Branch in His humanity will be the offspring of Israel and will exhibit the true beauty and godliness which only God's saved-ones recognize as the true glory of humanity. And all those who have escaped the wrath of God and have found salvation in Zion will be named holy. These have their names written down in God's book of life. This will all be done for God's people when God has brought about a washing away of the filth of sin like that which has contaminated the women of Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit of God will accomplish this through a judgment and purging. Then the Lord will create over the whole covenant people, wherever they may assemble, divine guidance, divine protection and divine access. Over all of His saved people God will create a shelter which will afford them divine protection and refreshment sufficient to meet every danger and need.

### COMMENTS

v. 2 THE MESSIAH: "In that day," is a flashback to chapter 2:2, ". . . in the latter days." Israel and Judah have been punished 2:6—4:1; a remnant has escaped; out of that remnant another day (far in the future) a better day, has come. This "branch" has to be The Branch, The Messiah (Cf. Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12) if the context is to be taken into account. The Branch, Jesus Christ, is to come and demonstrate the true beauty and glory of Israel. The "fruit of the land" probably refers to the Messiah's humanity having its connection to the nation of Israel (Cf. Num. 13 for "the land of Canaan," which God gave to Israel). The writer of Hebrews probably had this prophecy in mind when he wrote, "For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah . . ." (Heb. 7:14). Edward J. Young points to four reasons "the fruit of the land" refers to the Messiah: (a) The parallelism between branch and fruit (Cf. Jn. 12:24); (b) In many passages of Scripture there is reference to the fruitfulness of the Messianic age; (c) The text provides no contrast between fruitfulness and barrenness; (d) Only when the phrase

“fruit of the land” refers to the Messiah is there a satisfactory connection with what follows. It might be, however, that the “fruit of the land” is the product of the Branch, and not the Branch Himself. In this case it would be the redeemed community, the church, Christians.

**v. 3 MESSIANIC PEOPLE:** In those “latter days” the people who have escaped the wrath of God and have had their names recorded in God’s book of life will have done so because they have been washed and cleansed (v. 4). An important parallel to this whole context is the passage in Joel 2:28—3:3 where practically the same figurative language is used to describe the Messianic age. Those “left in Zion” will be truly called holy in contrast with those of Jerusalem of Isaiah’s day who were claiming to be holy but were filthy. The apostle Paul leaves no doubt that the “Zion” of prophecy is the New Testament church (Cf. Heb. 12:22ff).

**v. 4 THE MESSIANIC CLEANSING:** The Lord Himself will take action to cleanse “Zion” of the filth of sin such as the women of Jerusalem were guilty. The only point at which God could have brought about cleansing, in any ultimate sense, through perfect justice was at the cross of Christ (Cf. Romans 3:21-26). God punished man’s sins in Christ and was perfectly just in keeping His word of judgment upon sin, while at the same time He was perfectly merciful in imputing to man the righteousness of Christ (Cf. II Cor. 5:14-21). Zechariah proclaims this great cleansing (Zech. 12:10—13:9). This spirit of “burning” is portrayed in Malachi as taking place when the Messiah came to purge “the sons of Levi” (Cf. Malachi 3:1-4). All this cleansing began to take place when Jesus came and offered Himself as both the divine agent to satisfy God’s demands and the divine power to meet man’s needs for purification. It is still taking place through the work of the Holy Spirit as His message of conviction (Jn. 16) is preached and men respond in faith. But it will find its consummation in God’s great and final Day of Judgment and Salvation.

**v. 5-6 THE MESSIANIC PRESENCE:** It is significant that the word “create” is from the same Hebrew word, *bara*, used in Genesis 1! That which is to come to pass will be brought into

being exclusively by the personal and direct power of God. When the future glory of Zion comes, God is going to "create" a new Jerusalem (Cf. Isa. 65:17-25; 66:22-23, etc.). The "cloud" and the "flaming fire" are figures borrowed from the wilderness wandering of the covenant people. They depict Divine guidance, protection and access to God's presence. Over the whole redeemed community of the new "Zion" God is going to spread a canopy. Just as over the Jewish wedding ceremony there was a protective canopy, so here there will also be one to protect God's bride, the church. There will also be a "booth" (pavilion) for refreshing shelter and rest and a refuge from the storms. The booth was a small, protective structure, such as was used by Israel in the wilderness at the Feast of Booths. The "covert" is a hiding place. There are so many New Testament figures brought to our mind here—Jesus speaks of the man who builds his house upon the rock for protection from the storms; our life is said to be hid with Christ in God, etc.

It is reassuring to listen to these sweet words of hope from the prophet squarely in the midst of his thundering of the judgments of God upon sin. It reminds us that the message of God is always two-fold; judgment upon sin, but salvation for faith and repentance.

### QUIZ

1. What "day" is referred to in verse 2?
2. Who are those that "are escaped of Israel"?
3. How are they to be named holy?
4. What is the "spirit of justice"? — the "spirit of burning"?
5. How does the N.T. become the fulfillment of all these figures of protection?