

## Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Lecture 4

### Exploring Isaiah 2:1-4:6

#### Review

We have been looking at the early part of Isaiah; and that first section 1-6 divides, as I've mentioned, into three sections beginning with statements of judgment and ending with statements of blessing. We looked last hour at 1:1 to 2:5 focusing primarily on 2:1-4, which is a well-known passage of blessing in Isaiah. It is a statement of future blessing when swords will be beaten into plowshares, and the word of the Lord will go forth from Zion. We discussed various approaches to interpretation of that. What I want to do this morning initially is go on to the next section, which is 2:6 to 4:6. Again just to make a few brief comments about the section on judgment, but go on for the most part and focus on 4:2-6, which comes at the end of that section.

#### Isaiah 2:5

So let's go back to the text. After 2:5, which was an exhortation, at the end of that section of blessing that we looked at in the last hour. We really have a new section that begins. See, 2:5 says, "Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord." It is the Lord who will accomplish the wonderful things that are mentioned in 2:1-4. After 2:5 then, that exhortation, Isaiah turns back to the sin of the people of his own day. So there is a real dividing point between versus 5 and 6 of chapter 2. I really think that there is a better chapter division there than simply a verse division because you really have a major shift in thought ending at 2:5, and at 2:6 a long passage of denunciation and judgment begins.

#### Isaiah 2:8 Denunciation and Universal Judgment

Notice verse 8: "Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands." When you get to verse 10, from 10 to 21, you have depicted a time of judgment. When you read down through 10 to 21 it really seems like it's a time of world judgment.

It is universal; not just some local immediate crisis of judgment, but a world judgment. And I think what Isaiah does here is introduce a theme that you find later in his book. Remember Isaiah chapters 24 to 27 is that section that is often called “Isaiah’s Little Apocalypse.” And you have depicted in 24-27 this coming world judgment in much more detail than you have here. But here it seems like that’s being anticipated. It is further worked out later in the book.

Notice verse 10 begins, “Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from the dread of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty.” Look at verse 12: “The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted and they will be humbled.” Verse 17: “The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day; idols will totally disappear. Men will flee to caves in the rock and to holes in the ground from the dread of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty when he rises to shake the earth.” That same phrase is at the end of 21: “The dread of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.” So from 2:10 to 21 it seems like you have a picture of this coming judgment of a universal scope. That theme is developed further in chapters 24-27.

#### Isaiah 2:22-3:15 Immediate Situation: Conduct of Irresponsible Leaders

But when you get to verse 22, it seems that Isaiah’s back more to the immediate situation. From 2:22, all the way down through 3:15, in the immediate situation, the focus for the most part is on the conduct of irresponsible leaders. Yes, the conduct of irresponsible leaders. Because of that Israel will be judged and that judgment undoubtedly is realized with the Babylonian captivity. So that is not this distant future, universal judgment but a more immediate, more localized judgment. Again, I am not going to take time to work through this verse by verse, but verse 22 begins with the statement “Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?”

Chapter 3, verse 2, says, “...the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and elder, the captain of fifty, the man of rank, the counselor, skilled

craftsman and clever enchanter. I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them. People will oppress each other—man against man, neighbor against neighbor.” Go down to verse 12 in chapter 3: “Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. O my people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path. The Lord takes his place in court”—verse 14—“against the elders and leaders of his people: ‘It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?’ Declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.” The general focus of the condemnation seems to be against the unworthy leaders that are in place in the land.

#### Isaiah 3:16-4:1 Denounces the Daughters of Zion

From verse 16 of chapter 3 down through 4:1 it’s an unfortunate chapter division there at the end of 3. The real break is after 4:1 not at 3:26. But from 3:16 to 4:1 Isaiah denounces the daughters of Zion, the women of Jerusalem, who are there: pride, arrogance, materialism, misplaced values. We looked at that passage last quarter. It is a classic description of these women. “The Lord says, ‘The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the Lord will make their scalps bald.’” There is a contrast between the affluence and the finery to the coming judgment. “In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles, headbands, crescent necklaces, earrings, bracelets, veils, the headdresses and ankle chains, and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings, nose rings, fine robes, the capes, and the cloaks, the purses, and mirrors and the linen garments, and tiaras, and shawls. Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of sash, a rope; instead of well-dresses hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding. Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle. The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground.” And you see the close right into 4:1, “In that day seven women will take hold of one man and say, ‘We will eat our own food and provide our own clothes; only let us

be called by your name. Take away our disgrace!” So the real breaking point is after 4:1. The focus here is judgment on these women of Jerusalem. That’s this second section, you see, of judgment. It goes from 2:6 to 4:1.

#### Isaiah 4:2-6 Future Blessing

Then we have this second brief passage of future blessing beginning in 4:2, and that is where I want to spend our time. The first part of our session today is on 4:2-6: “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.” Time of blessing for the days ahead, indeed!

#### “That Day”

Notice it begins with the phrase, “In that day.” It is in our interest to try to determine what “that day” means. In this context, you find the same expression in 3:18, in 4:1 and then in 4:2. If you go back to 3:18 we read, “In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery.” That day there seems to be quite clearly the day of judgment that is coming on the women of Zion. In 4:1, “In that day seven women will take hold of one man” is also referring to a day of judgment. Then in 4:2: “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious.” It seems here that all of these three references don’t have reference to the same day. 3:18 and 4:1 refer to the destruction and punishment that seems like it’s something that is going to come in the fairly near future. Whereas 4:2 and what follows seems to have reference to the time in the more distant future--the time of blessing.

Sometimes interpreters try to interpret the phrase, “In that day,” as always referring to a particular day and even make it pretty much equivalent to “the day of the Lord.” Often the “day of the Lord” is seen as always eschatological. But if you look at the usage you’ll find it’s not always eschatological. It’s used for the battle of Carchemish in Jeremiah’s day. It’s used in Isaiah 13:9: “The day of the Lord is coming--a cruel day with wrath and fierce anger.” The context there is the judgment on the city of Babylon. The Medes are going to defeat Babylon. In 13:17 it says “I’ll stir up the Medes against them, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold,” and so forth. Babylon shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. So it seems clear that the day of the Lord is not always eschatological, nor is “that day” always eschatological. You have to be careful when taking a phrase like “that day” and making it a technical term. You’ve got to look at the words and how they’re used.

In this case, in Isaiah 4:2, I think it simply means in the day about which I am about to speak. “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious.” In the day about which I am about to speak, these things are going to happen. Now, the question then becomes: what is the specific time of blessing referred to here? When does this prophecy find fulfillment?

#### Distinguishing Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:2-6

Let me make, before looking at this in more detail, a general comment. I do this in connection with the previous passage. This is a passage in which interpreters greatly differ. But it seems to me that in chapter 4 there is a different type of situation described than there is in chapter 2. That is, in this brief section of blessing in 2:1-4. If you read 4:2-6, there’s a different kind of situation. The tone is different; the spirit is different. 2:2-4 and the larger context of it parallels Micah: you have every man sitting under his own vine and fig tree and there is nothing to make them afraid. They all go forth from Zion; swords are beat into plowshares; they don’t want war anymore. There is nothing to make them afraid. God has established a time of peace and external safety in which danger is removed. That seems to be the situation in chapter 2. Danger is gone.

In chapter 4 the general tone seems to me to be quite different. Look at verses 5 and 6: “Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day, a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.” Of course, you have a figure there, but it seems to me that in verses 5 and 6 of chapter 4 you have a description of a time in which there is still need for defense. There is still that which can threaten; there is still that danger about. You need a hiding place from the storm and rain. Evidently, there still is that which can harm or injure, but God is giving protection from it. The language, of course, in verses 5 and 6 remind us of Israel in the wilderness when God provided guidance for the people with the cloud and the fire that led them through the wilderness. That wilderness wandering was a time of difficulty and danger. It seems that in verses 5 and 6 you have a picture of a pilgrim journey in which the Lord protects his people from the harm that is all about them. So it seems to me that in chapter 4 you have a time quite different from the millennial peace and safety of chapter 2. Chapter 4 speaks of a time when God blesses and protects his people, leading them through the midst of adversity. Now, if this is not millennial, then it seems to me that something needs to be at least considered is how we understand “Jerusalem” and “Zion” here, which are terms used earlier. Verse 3, states, “Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all those who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem.” Seems to me that maybe we should understand Jerusalem and Zion as figurative expressions for the true people of God at any time. We’ll come back to that and look at that in more detail, but I just throw that out as a suggestion that what you have here is a picture of the way in which God leads his true people through all periods of history.

#### Isaiah 4:2 Branch of the Lord

But before discussing that a bit further, let’s go back and look at the first verse of the section. After the expression “in that day,” about which I am about to speak, you read “the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the

pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.” The question is, what is the “Branch of the Lord?” “The Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious,” and of course that raises the immediate question, what is the fruit of the land? “The Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious,” and parallel to that is, “the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory for the survivors in Israel.” Now that phrase and its parallel, “the Branch of the Lord” and “the fruit of the land,” have been interpreted in three different ways. First, both phrases can be understood in the literal sense. We are back into this question of literal verses figurative. If taken literally, then it says orchards and vegetable gardens will be beautiful and glorious for those who are safe in Israel. Branches, orchards, fruit of the earth, vegetable gardens, and produce are being talked about. “The Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.” So orchards and vegetable gardens will be beautiful and glorious for those who are safe in Israel. Look at your citation collection, page 10, top of the page, from J. Barton Payne, first paragraph. In Isaiah 4:2—and various other places—in Isaiah 4:2 Isaiah predicted, “in that day” – in the future Messianic Kingdom – “shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious. The fruit of the land shall be excellent.” The Branch at this point does not appear to be the Messiah, as in 11:1. (See number 39 below.) “But the parallelism in the second line favors a literal agricultural increase.” So Payne is one who takes this as quite literal, speaking of agricultural increase. That’s one way to interpret it.

The second way to interpret the phrase is that the: first phrase could be taken as a figurative reference to Christ. “The Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious.” And the second phrase, “the fruit of the earth,” in its literal meaning refers to agriculture. Here they are split in two. This approach states the “Branch of the Lord” is a figurative Messianic reference, yet the second phrase concerning “the fruit” is taken literally as referring to agricultural productivity. The third approach is to take both phrases as figurative references to Christ. “Branch of the Lord,” “fruit of the earth” are both figurative references to Christ.

Now, some comments on these last two suggestions as you move away from the

literal: It seems to me that the context makes it unlikely that the reference is simply to agriculture. When you read through the rest of the passage, the blessings that are described don't emphasize material things, material prosperity; they emphasize spiritual things. They emphasize God's protection from danger and evil. And added to that is the fact that the phrase, "the Branch of the Lord," occurs elsewhere in context where it's quite explicitly clear that the phrase refers to the Messiah.

Now it's interesting if you look at a concordance you will find that there are 18 Hebrew words that are translated by the English word "branch" in the King James Version. In other words, when you read "branch" in English, you're not always reading the same Hebrew word. Behind the English term *branch* you can find 18 different Hebrew words. The one used here is *samak*. I think we should note that it's not the one used in Isaiah 11:1; Isaiah 11:1 is *netzer*.

See, Isaiah 11:1 is a very familiar passage. You read there, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him--." In Isaiah 11:1 you're clearly talking about an individual on whom the Spirit of the Lord is going to rest, and that individual is labeled "the Branch that will come out of the stump of Jesse."

As you go on through Isaiah 11, this is the one who is going to establish his universal kingdom. It's clearly messianic. Yet "*branch*" is a different Hebrew word. But the word that is used in Isaiah 4:2 is *samak*, which is used in a number of other passages that are also clearly Messianic. For example, Jeremiah 23:5 reads: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch"; again, it's clearly Messianic. The next phrase is: "A King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called." It's not only the king of the line of David, but his name is "The Lord Our Righteousness." So you find it in Jeremiah 23:5, you find it in Jeremiah 33:15, you find it in Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12. So, in those places the word is used to describe a man who is a divinely sent king of the Davidic line. When you compare Scripture then – which is the first principle of biblical interpretation – you



compare Scripture with Scripture to see what light other passages may shed on the passage you're working with; and when you compare Scripture, I think these passages show not only that it's possible to interpret this phrase in a Messianic sense, but it's perhaps the case that Jeremiah and Zechariah are echoing the use of it from Isaiah. See Jeremiah and Zechariah come after Isaiah, and it's very possible that Jeremiah and Zechariah are using a term which they were familiar with already used in the Messianic sense and they are echoing it. So it seems to me that there is much to be said in the context for understanding the "Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious," as a Messianic reference.

Now, as I mentioned, some will say the first phrase is Messianic because you have that parallel with the Branch, but the second phrase is agricultural because you don't have a parallel with the "fruit of the land" in other Messianic contexts. It seems to me that breaks the parallelism. Parallelism is very characteristic in Hebrew. It seems to me whichever way you go with this, it's best to keep the parallelism. You are either talking about agriculture or you're talking about a figure for the coming of the Messiah. So it seems to me that the third interpretation is preferable--taking both parts of the verse as figurative for Christ.

Some have gone further than that and seen a representation in the language here of the divine and human aspects of a person. "The branch of the Lord" emphasizes the divine nature of Christ, while "the fruit of the earth," suggests Christ's human nature. Here you have an informational reckoning of the divine and human nature of identifying the Messiah as the second person of the trinity. He is the seed of a woman: he is a human being, the fruit of the earth, yet at the same time he is the Branch of the Lord, deity--the second person of the Trinity.

Now I think it's clear that the concept of the two natures of the person of Christ is clearly taught in the New Testament. Whether or not you can find that here I think is more of a question. I think certainly we can question whether Isaiah understood the later biblical revelation about the nature of the person of Christ as developed in the New Testament. But then it still is possible that he was led by the Holy Spirit to use words that

would correspond with that reality when the fuller revelation was given without himself fully understanding it.

My impression is that he could because the ultimate author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit. It seems quite possible that prophets could speak better than they knew. That's a point of issue and discussion of hermeneutics. There are some who would say the only legitimate meaning for any text of Scripture is the meaning which the author himself fully comprehended when he spoke it. I think that's too limited. Walter Kaiser's one who argues it. I think his purpose is to try to protect against Scripture going in a direction where meaning becomes indeterminate. Personally, I think that's too limiting to say that a prophet could not speak better than he knew because of the function of the Holy Spirit.

Well, that's verse 2: "In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory to the survivors of Israel." I mentioned earlier the Branch of the Lord is figurative; that's simply taking agricultural entities and utilizing them as a reference in a figurative way for the coming of Christ.

But why pick "the Branch"? Why was that term used? It's clear in some passages that it is Messianic. If "the Branch of the Lord" is a figure, why not "the fruit of the earth" because of the parallelism? To break the parallelism it seems to me that you go against the Hebrew. If it is simply agricultural, it doesn't seem to fit with the context. If "Branch" is a figure for Christ, then take both as a figure for Christ. The next step beyond that is to say it's suggesting the divine and human natures of Christ; I'd be less certain about that – possible, but that may be pushing it too far.

I'd say that you are touching on something that's certainly a legitimate issue. With eschatology, I'd say you have to make distinctions. Some things are clearer than others. I don't think there is any question that the move from the general and clear back to the more specific—I don't think there's any question Scripture teaches that there will be a Second Advent of Christ, and connected with the Second Advent of Christ there is going to be a judgment. On that broad chronology you have the clear teaching of Scripture. When you start getting into more details of what's going to surround that Second Advent of Christ and what sequence of events there's going to be, and whether there's going to

be a Millennium or not be a Millennium, whether Christ will return before, in the middle of, or after the tribulation—all those kinds of questions, you have matters that are open to discussion. I think with the Millennium you have an issue that's more clear than the seven year tribulation period. This passage is probably less clear than many because its interpreters don't agree on whether it's talking about eschatology or whether it's talking about the present time. I'm more inclined to think, because it seems to contrast with what we looked at in chapter 2, that it's talking about the present time in the figurative, and that there are a lot of figures in this passage.

When you get into figurative language, you're into an area where I think the interpreter is forced to make a judgment on the basis of the context. The evidence must be weighed to go one direction or another direction, and there is going to be a difference of opinion. There are some things that are more physical: "the trees clap their hands." Many acknowledge it's figurative – nobody's going to argue with that. But again there's a sort of a continuum there where you move from what is clearly figurative to what is less clearly figurative. Some cases might be figurative and might not be. Other cases are clearly literal. Here we are somewhere in the middle. You just have to make a judgment on it, and one person's going to say it's literal and then the next person's going to say, "No, I think it's figurative." Probably neither should be dogmatic. Isaiah is full of these kinds of interpretive problems: figure, literal, is it talking about the present time, is it talking about the Millennium? The passages are hard to make judgments on.

Jerusalem/Zion = the True People of God

Let's go a bit further with this. I suggested that it seems the general thrust of the passage is that God will protect his people on their pilgrim journey. I suggested earlier that that would imply that "Jerusalem" and "Zion" are to be understood as figures for the true people of God, because you see when you go on to verse 3, "Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem." Some might say, "Well now, wait a minute: what basis is there for concluding that "Zion" and "Jerusalem" may have a figurative, or symbolic, significance,

not just for the literal inhabitants of that city but for the people of God generally? That principle is one that is often used by a-millennial interpreters who speak of “Jerusalem” or “Zion” or “Israel” as fulfilled in the church. “Israel” becomes the symbol of the church, “Jerusalem” and “Zion” become a symbol, or figure, of the church. I think a case can be made that a symbolic significance can be found for “Jerusalem” already in the Old Testament, without getting into that issue of the relationship between the testaments, between Israel and the church.

#### Psalm 87:4-6 on the True People of God

Already in the Old Testament you can find passages in which “Zion” or “Jerusalem” takes on a symbolic, or figurative, significance. I think most interesting in that regard is Psalm 87: 4-6. Psalm 87’s a short Psalm, let’s look at it. It reads: “He has set his foundation on the holy mountain; the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” Notice verse 3; you’ve probably heard this line somewhere, “Glorious things are said of you, O city of God.” “Glorious things are said of you, O city of God. I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me—Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush—and will say,” – these foreign peoples – “‘this one was born in Zion.’ Indeed, of Zion it will be said, ‘This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.’ The Lord will write in the register of the peoples: ‘This one was born in Zion.’ As they make music they will sing, ‘All my fountains are in you.’”

J. Barton Payne comments on that: “To be born in Zion means neither more nor less than to participate in the salvation of those who know God.” Psalm 87:4 and 5, “this one was born in her,” “these foreign peoples.” He speaks of it as referring to moral and religious adoption of Yahweh. The man whose name is recorded for life in Jerusalem. Go back to Isaiah 4:3: “Those who are left in Zion who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The man whose name is recorded for life in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 4:3). The Lord registers the peoples – taking the phrase from Psalms 87:6: “The Lord will write in the register of the people.” It’s

therefore justified to say he is spiritually a citizen of Zion. Page 10 of your citations, the third paragraph, under Payne's article on Jerusalem in the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, "If the phrase 'born in Zion' represents the salvation of those who know God, it is significant that the Psalmist also lists Rahab for Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia as 'among them acknowledge me.' And after describing the assurance of those native to Jerusalem, he adds, 'The Lord will write in the registers of the peoples, "this one was born there"' (Psalm 87:6). As Craigie summarizes it, other nations are enrolled with Israel as the people of Yahweh. From this comes the New Testament usage with its references to the church militant and the New Testament's mention that Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother (Galatians 4:26). Or reference to the church triumphant when it explains that you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven. So it seems to me that in the Old Testament itself you can find evidence that there are places where "Zion" and "Jerusalem" are used figuratively, or symbolically, for the true people of God and Psalm 87 is a key passage for that.

#### Isaiah 4:2-4 Messiah's Blessings

But if you take that significance here, in verse 2 of Isaiah 4, then you have a reference to the Messiah and the blessings he brings to his people. To those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, who are called holy, who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem, the true people of God. The Messiah will bring these blessings to those who are his. Verse three indicates to whom the blessings apply. When you get on to verse 4, you have a previous condition of the promise in verse 3: "The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire." He will wash away the filth.

I think here you need to transfer from the physical to the moral sense; the filth and not the outward dirt, but the moral, spiritual condition of people will be cleansed. He will wash away the filth, cleanse the bloodstains. There is blood guiltiness that's going to be washed away. And how will that be washed away? By the purifying work of the Holy

Spirit. He will wash away the filth, cleanse the bloodstains by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. So it seems to me that the passage speaks of those reserved as a people of God who come in contrast to what went before with these women of Jerusalem that found their beauty in the ornamentation of their jewelry and fine clothing and so forth. This passage speaks of those preserved as people of God who find their ornamentation in Christ. "In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel." It's in Christ they will find their beauty and their glory. The Spirit of God will cleanse them from guilt and from filth.

#### Isaiah 4:5-6 God's Protection

Then it goes on to speak of the protection and covering that Christ will provide for his people in verses 5 and 6. "Then Lord will create over Mount Zion, over those who assemble there, a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night," drawing on the imagery of the wilderness wandering when he went before his people. Drawing on that kind of language and that kind of imagery you are saying that God will protect his people. There will be a shelter and shade in the heat of the day, a refuge and hiding place from the storm and from rain.

This is a very similar idea to Isaiah 43, the first few verses, but with a different figure. Isaiah 43 is a beautiful passage. Isaiah 43:2: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you, when you walk through the fire you will not be burned, the flames will not set you ablaze." In other words, there is all around us that which can hurt, can destroy, and we will experience some of that. We won't be spared from the waters, but the waters are not going to overflow us. We have to walk through the fire, but the fire is not going to consume us because of the Lord's protection of his people. Page 10 of your citations, bottom of the page, is taken from E. J. Young, volume 1: "In place of the false glory and ornament, 2:5-4:1, "the genuine and real glory and ornament, namely the Lord himself, will appear," Isaiah 4:2, that's the Branch of the Lord. This is proved by the equation

with Isaiah 28:5.

Lastly, it should clearly be noted that only when the phrase, “fruit of the land” refers to the Messiah is there a satisfactory connection with what follows. On other views, the connection is broken. If Isaiah is speaking only of the productivity of the land the thought is immediately dropped not to introduce it again. In fact, it is an abrupt thought, and the reason for its introduction is difficult to discover. If, on the other hand, it is speaking of the Messiah, then he has given a general statement, the detail of which he introduces in the following verses. So I am inclined to get back to this structure 2:1-4 as being Millennial like we discussed in the last hour. I’m inclined to see Isaiah 4:2-6 as a figurative description of God protecting his true people in the present time, or in all time, even within the Old Testament times. But those who are the true people of God, the Lord will provide protection for them through the work of his Son.

Hymn: “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken”

Most of you are familiar with the hymn “Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken.” We often sing that. Listen to the words. The words are: “Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion city of our God: he whose word cannot be broken formed thee for his own abode; on the Rock of Ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose? With salvation’s walls surrounded, thou mayst smile at all thy foes.” Second verse, taken right out of our passage, Isaiah 4: “Round each habitation hovering, see the cloud and fire appear, for a glory and a covering”—verses 5 and 6—“showing that the Lord is near... Blest inhabitants of Zion washed in the Redeemer’s blood! Jesus, whom their souls rely on, makes them kings and priests of God.” Last stanza. “Savior, if of Zion’s city, I through grace a member am.” See the way the writer of this hymn interpreted the passage. “If of Zion’s city, I through grace a member am, let the world deride or pity, I will glory in thy Name. Fading is the worldling’s pleasure, all his boasted pomp and show; solid joys and lasting treasure none but Zion’s children know.” Written by John Newton, music by Haydn. It is a great hymn, and we often sing it. When you sing it, have you ever thought about the words and the relationship with this passage? Some

people think this passage is Millennial. If they think it's Millennial, then they better not sing that hymn next time. The hymn writer has interpreted this in a figurative way, as Zion being the true people of God, and we are members of that body, that we are believers in Christ. And this passage is appropriate in referring to that.

#### Linking Isaiah 4:1-6 with Rev. 20 in the Millennial Period(?) or Pilgrim Journey

Now, I'm not suggesting we get our exegesis from a hymn writer, but it seems to me that the conditions described in chapter 2 and elsewhere suggest that danger has been removed, Satan is bound, there's nothing to make afraid, there's nothing threatening. In this passage there is something threatening. So it seems to me you're talking about a different time. It probably depends on how far you push some of those things. It seems to me that with the Revelation 20 passage about Satan being bound, that during that period when Satan is bound, there is not going to be that which can make one afraid. The end of that period, when he's loose, there will be those that again will join his forces, and of course, at the end of the Millennial period, I think that again you will have opposition arise. So how absolute do you make that distinction? If you look at the Micah passage where it says, "Every man will dwell under his own vine and fig tree; there will be nothing to make afraid," that sounds quite different than Isaiah 4:6 when it says, "It will have a shelter from the heat of day, a refuge and hiding place from storm and rain." Just seems to me that the environment is different when there is nothing to make afraid and when there is storm and rain as a figure used to indicate danger. But I'll grant there is probably, again, a matter of degree here how far you are going to push that difference. Or you may say that it's not that great a difference. Undoubtedly, though, there is a difference there.

Now I would agree with that. To me the figure here is of the pilgrim journey: there's rain, there's storm, but the true people of God can rest assured that God in His graciousness will guide them through like Israel and his clan and protect them from the evil one. To me that's a reality; what we experience is here expressed by means of figures.



## Methods of Interpretation and Vannoy's Approach to the Complex Future in Isaiah

Let me make a couple other brief comments and then we'll take a break. I think we have to be careful of two extremes. When you look at interpreters generally you will find that some will see no picture of the Millennium in Isaiah at all. They are amillennial. There is no Millennium, so of course, you can't find any Millennium in Isaiah. They see no picture of the Millennium at all. On the other hand, you can find certain interpreters who see the Millennium in almost everything Isaiah says. Seems to me, if you carefully work through the book of Isaiah, you will find Isaiah looks to the future and he deals with many themes in doing so. There's a whole broad perspective of the future that opens up in the book. Initially, you see God's wrath on Israel in the Old Testament period and the coming exile. He often addresses that theme. Israel is going into captivity, into the hands of the Babylonians. He looks beyond exile and sees the return under Cyrus. He looks beyond that and he sees the coming of Christ the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, who will be himself a sacrifice for sin. And it seems to me beyond that—and this becomes very clear and we'll look at some of these passages—he sees that spread of the gospel through the Gentiles. And I think when you come to this passage he sees the protection of God over his people during their pilgrim journey. It refers to the true people of God. Beyond that he sees the blessings of the Millennial Age, and beyond that he sees the blessing of the eternal state in the new heavens and the new earth. So you see, you have a whole range of future realities that are described in the book of Isaiah. All those phases of God's redemptive program are referred to in the book. When you come to the book, what you need to do is to try to determine which of those phases is in view in any given passage. One should not try either to remove all Millennial references, on one hand, or try to force all the passages into a Millennial context, on the other end. Let the passages speak for themselves, particularly on the issue of Millennial or not Millennial.

It seems to me that again that—I mentioned this earlier—that a nondispensational, premillennial viewpoint allows you to come to a passage like this and let it lead you where the specifics of its content seem to take you without having the “system” decide in

advance. This can't be referring, as some dispensational premillennialists would say, to the church; it's got to be Millennial. And when you come to Isaiah 2, some of them on the other hand would say that can't be Millennial it's got to be referring to the church because there isn't any Millennium. You have to be careful to exclude such things, and it seems to me Isaiah sees all these future phases of God's coming redemptive program and the outworking of it. We ought to come to these passages and try to just let the inherent specifics of the passage itself lead. So several phases of the future are: the spread of the gospel to Gentiles, God's protection over his people during their pilgrim journey, blessings of Millennial Age, eternal state, new heavens and new earth.

Alright, let's take a break and we'll go on to our next section and beyond next hour.

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