

ISA 4:1 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!"

ISA 4:2 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] And **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] And there will be a **shelter** to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from **the storm** and **the rain**.

BRANCH, Land, City, Earth

Vs. 2

In that day: 2:11, 12, 17, 20, 3:7, 18, 4:1 (7 times) then 4:2....

Branch of the Lord: "(Num 13:23?; Isa 4:2, 11:1; Jer 1:11; 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; John 15:1-4)

Family tree (Num 4:2)

Part of a real tree (Gen 49:11)

The tabernacle tree (Ex 25:33).

Wine and Branches (Gen 49:11; Num 13:23; Eze 15:2;

Fruit of the Earth/ land: Jesus? Real fruit?

Survivors of Israel: REMNANT. Gen 45:7, Isa 1:9 (survivors cf. Rom 9:27),

Vs. 3

It will come about: The END of the WORLD is in view

Zion/Jerusalem (Davidic covenant: 2 Sam 7, Ps 2:7-8) "I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession."

The Remnant is "**called Holy**" – BECAUSE GOD DWELLS THERE.

The Remnant = "**everyone who is recorded for life**"

Remnant, Holiness, Life = **PREDESTINATION**

Vs 4

Washed away (*rahats*) the filth
Of the daughters of Zion
Of Jerusalem
Purged (*duach*) the bloodshed

“By the Spirit (ruach) of judgment” (Gen 3:8 [day and spirit], Judges 3:10, Isa 42:1)

“By the Spirit (ruach) of burning”

Spirit: (Gen 1:2)

Vs. 5

Lord will create (*bara*) – Gen 1:1
Over Whole area of Mt. Zion
Her assemblies

PRESENCE OF GOD

A cloud by day (Ex 13:21-22)

Smoke (Ex 19:18, 20:18)

Flaming fire by night (Ex 13:21-22)

The glory (Ex 16:7, 10, 24:16, 40:34; Num 14:10, 21; 1 Kings 8:11)
will be a canopy (Ps 19:6; Joel 2:16)

Vs. 6

Booth (Lev 23:42; Amos 9:11, Ps 91:4)

The angels on the ark covered the glory of God as they will in Isa 6

Shelter from the heat by day (Jonah 4:6, John 17:24)

REFUGE (Ps 2:12, 7:1, 18:2) and protection (Ps 5:11, 91:14, 116:6).

Storm and Rain: (Isa 43:2)

JN 17:24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

“When the Messiah and His reign shall prosper, when God Himself through His grace will provide a covering over all the glory of Zion, there will be protection from evil and trouble.” Young, 188.

“Isaiah’s picture of the eschatological kingdom as a paradise created anew under the heavenly tent covering of divine Glory” Kline, Images, 36.

In the final encampment the glory of the Lord’s presence fills the whole camp, and the protecting cloud, like a vast canopy or pavilion, covers the entire site and all who

are assembled there. There will no longer be any need for the tabernacle or temple, for the glory of the Lord will be directly accessible to all.” Motyer, Isaiah, 54.

The Branch and the Spirit

Isaiah 4

Let us go back to a time long ago. In your minds eye, imagine living in a time of plagues, Pharaohs, parting of seas, and pillars of smoke. I'm sure you've done this before. Better than any fantasy story every written (because this story is real history), think about the protection from the sun in canopies of cloud, the potion of life in water from rocks, the provisions for the body in manna from heaven. But even as God blessed, he also cursed. It was a time of aches, snakes, and earthquakes. This is the story of the Exodus, of God taking for himself a nation, turning them from little infants to young adults – strong and hungry, ready to take by force the land of promise after 40 years of wandering aimlessly in the wilderness.

It is among the most familiar stories the Bible, and for good reason. This event was pivotal, not only to Israel, but to the history of the redemption of the entire world. I am convinced that one could spend the rest of their life studying the first 5 books of the Bible and never fail to learn something new about it. Combine the mystery of the imagery with the depth of the knowledge of God and you have for yourself a recipe for writing the rest of the Scripture, the rest of redemptive history. It is no wonder then that this event is central not only to Moses but to the history books, the psalms, the prophets, the gospels, the letters, the epistles and the apocalypse of John.

Now then, come back to today for a moment. People want "relevant" sermons in our day, and for good reason. Who doesn't want to know how to be a better Christian, how to learn the Scripture better, how to stop sin from encroaching, how to act better around others, how to pray more and better and with others, how to enjoy their work, how to live morally upright lives in a corrupt and wicked generation, how to develop meaningful, lasting relationships. **These "how to's" are perfectly good desires!** But often times, our search for relevance ends up being frustrated by our own good intentions.

It is just too easy to seek for relevance to the how's of life through programs and formulas. And programs and formulas are a major Evangelical fascination. What are the "Prayer of Jabez" or the "40 Days of Purpose" or even "Experiencing God" if not formulas that you apply to your life and steps that you take to achieve quantifiable goals through them? Do we not often use spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, bible study, fellowship, service and other things in a similar manner – to achieve some given result? We are nothing if not a pragmatic people. They become sort of like exercise programs that you see on TV. "If you do this program, do the diet, and take your pills, then in just six weeks you will have the body you always wanted." In the spiritual realm its, "If you just set up a time to have the youth group do a bible study or to have adults praying together, then magically {poof,} you will become a better Christian, you will have the satisfaction that you have always desired and the growth with God that you are looking for."

I was talking with one of you a couple of weeks back about the approach that I used to take in climbing mountains. My stated goal was to get to the top of all the fourteeners in the state. I managed to achieve that goal. And I think that goal is perfectly legitimate and good. There is nothing wrong with having goals. But along the way (it didn't take that much time actually), I began to notice a change in my attitude. It was more of an awareness that I always had I think, but it began to bubble to the surface. My stated goal become more like the icing on the cake than the actual purpose of the climb. I began to take great satisfaction *in the process* of the hike itself, the ups, the downs, the heat, the cold, the companionship, the view (that was always there), the trees, the birds, the marmots, the quiet, the rain, the sound of a foot climbing on snow, the heavy breathing, the exercise, the lunch, even the twisted ankles, the falling rocks, and the lightening were things I began to ponder. In other

words, the goal that was beginning to mature in my own heart was the journey of which the destination is only a part.

I found something strange begin to happen to me. In those early days , I viewed the hiking part as a very long, but necessary evil that I had to undergo in order to achieve my real goal: The summit. But after a time, though the mountains are always different and each has its own beauty, the summit itself does not bring the satisfaction that it did in the beginning. In all honestly, "Bagging the fourteener's" goal can easily become a source of pride that becomes an idol. To make a long story short, I began to understand the pleasure of the goal was greatly enhanced by my enjoying the journey itself. It makes the time pass more quickly on the hike itself and it brings a sense of completion and fulfillment to the summit (and getting back down in one piece) that you just can't get from the goal of climbing the fourteeners for the sole purpose of getting to the top.

I want to bring to your mind, here, two things. I think that each of us has a propensity to either the journey or the summit. Each of us tends to emphasize one over the other in our own personal lives and we might do better if we learn a bit more to focus on the one that we neglect. **Both the goal and the process are valuable.**

Consider Israel again. She had a goal, didn't she? She was promised the land of Abraham as an inheritance. In fact, if she did not have this goal, her wanderings in the wilderness would have become absolutely unbearable. Without the goal and a finality to the wandering, all you end up with is a sense of purposelessness to life. This is the philosophy of nihilism, and it is the logical end of Darwinism. Ultimately, all you are left with is either ending your life because it is so depressing and there is no end in sight to the torment, or you become a hedonist, living for today because tomorrow you will die anyway. Quite honestly, this is our culture. It is one big journey with no destination. Christians therefore need to be reminded all the more often of our destination and ultimate goal. Otherwise we get caught up to easily in an ocean of stuff with no land upon which we may be saved from drowning.

God knew that Israel, being the child that she was, was not able in her infancy to take possession of the promised land until she had matured. It is more than just the wickedness and rebellion of that generation that brought her 40 years of wandering around in a desert you know. It is that God was using this time in the life of a brand new nation to grow the people through a long and difficult process. Israel had to *learn* that quick fixes (entering the promised land right away) are not what life with God is all about. **There is no short cut to spiritual maturity.** Life in Christ is an eternal process of growing more and more in the knowledge of God. Since he is infinite, this process by definition can never end. It is also about **relearning who we are as created beings**, not fallen beings. It is about once again **taking creation seriously in all realms of life.** It means **relearning what it means to be an image bearer: a worker, a ruler, a keeper, a physical being with appetites and desires**, all of which were created GOOD, not evil. It means learning to **come to terms with the monotony of picking manna** every single day – to the glory of God. It means **learning to be led** around though you do not see how this is going to get you to the promised land. It means **learning to live in community** with others in obedience to the law to love God and your neighbor. It means **learning how to develop culture** that comes from applying the principles given in the law. For Israel it meant learning to understand why one needed to participate so regularly in the sacrificial system that never ended and that cost you so much financially. **You see friends, the process of the wilderness takes up 99% of the story, doesn't it?** The goal is always there, always spurring them on. But the process is where one begins to truly understand what it means to be redeemed creatures.

The Christian life is just not a formula. Formulas of course do "work" (whatever that means) for a short time. But over a long haul, they never satisfy. And they never create the sort of maturity that each of us longs for in our Christian life. Programs never do, no matter how spiritual they are. It is their inability to satisfy that makes so many Christians go searching

for the next latest and greatest evangelical fad (or “fix”). We are hoping that somehow we might find just that perfect application that will give permanent relief from the boredom and monotony that comes with being a sinful person on this earth. *We often times turn church into this very thing, don’t we?* It is our natural tendency. Sometimes, our search for relevance actually takes us away from *the only thing that is relevant: God as he comes to man in covenant to give us his promises and his plans for us and as he has revealed himself to us in the person of Christ and the person of the Holy Spirit.*

There is only one way to build a community and a relationship with another person, be it a fellow member of your church or God himself. You have to spend time with them and learn what it means to be with them. Now, somehow, I have to draw this to the text this week don’t I? Here is how I want to do it.

Isaiah 4

What we have before us is a glorious vision of the future pictured for us by Isaiah as he looks backward to the story of the exodus and the establishment of the nation. I want you to try to get a glimpse of the big picture here. How is a text that talks about the future relevant to our life today? Most people, quite honestly can’t see how it could be. This is why every single seminary sermon I heard on a theological text ultimately ended up being a “how-to” sermon. We just don’t see theology as being relevant to our lives. We don’t see how it makes a difference to anything practically speaking. So we force a pragmatic paradigm upon a text so that we can feel like we are accomplishing something spiritual by studying it.

There is a very subtle danger that we must avoid. *We are not to worship the Christian life.* What do I mean by that? *I mean that it is easy to make prayer, fasting, evangelism, church attendance and other spiritual “things” that we do our idols that we worship.* Friends, the Christian life isn’t the end itself. God is the end. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. God isn’t a program. He is a person. And we do him great dishonor when we pretend that we can know him by applying some formula to our relationship with him. But don’t go to the other extreme and think that these means are therefore bad.

The picture before you in Isaiah 4 is relevant because this is *your* story. What so many Christians do not understand is that the story of Israel is not only *for* Israel. We are not studying “them,” but rather we are studying ourselves! *This (and all of the Scripture) is not some brute fact of history, isolated from you by a giant chasm of time.* It is for God’s people today in a vitally real sense, because as we will see from Isaiah, their story is our story.

The story of Israel is a creation story – the creation of a nation. It is like the Christian story because ours is also a story of creation – the *new* creation. *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17)!* If you read Isaiah 4 carefully you will notice that there is no formula here, no program, and no law. It is all gospel. It is all what God is going to do completely apart from any individual here in this room. *So, there is nothing for you to do here but listen and hear from God.* And my friends, there is nothing more relevant or more satisfying in the entire universe than such a thing as this. I pray to God you may receive eyes to see!

As we have read, so now consider. *Can you see from Isaiah’s usage of exodus terminology how the Exodus of Israel into the promise land serves as a type, a pattern for our own exodus out of this present age and into the age to come: the new heavens, the new earth and the new Jerusalem?* Do you want to know how it is that you can learn to live in the sojourn of your life here and now? How you can “be” a better Christian here and now? There is the way you do it. Understand as well as you can Israel’s plight. Then understand how God used this example as a pattern for your own plight. Because if Isaiah is right, the story of the exodus is the story of each one of us.

Do you understand the grandeur of the promise that is yours in Christ? Do you keep it in the forefront of your mind that this promise will “never rust?” Or are you settling for things that are temporary, that belong to that which is passing away? **Are you putting your trust in your spiritual activities that you hope will bring you closer to God and make you more spiritual, or are you putting your trust in God how has made you as spiritual as you can be, and who then -as a means of grace - allows you have spiritual activities?** There is all the difference in the world between these two things. **Do you have it biblical or do you have it backwards?**

That was Israel’s biggest problem you know. She took her eyes off of the eternal and invisible and got captivated with the beauty of a world that is fading away. She turned that which is good into an idol that she worshiped. She despised the heavenly food of Christ and longed for a return to her slave food of cucumbers, garlic, and leeks because they tasted better to her physical fallen appetite. She was faithless and did not have the spiritual taste she needed. She was disgusted with the process of growth, because it didn’t produce the results she was looking for when she wanted it. She wanted the promise... NOW! In this she sinned greatly. God was going to have his revenge on that generation and on those generations in Israel to come, even as he will have it upon the rest of the world in the Day of the Lord.

Isaiah 4:2

And so Isaiah 4:2 begins with what is by now a common theme: “**In that day...**” It has been mentioned seven times already (**2:11, 12, 17, 20, 3:7, 18, 4:1**), and by now as we hear these words of doom we are presently bracing ourselves for another mighty wave of terror from God that will wash over us and crush us in the rocky coral below. This phrase awakens our senses to the fact that Isaiah is talking about the end of all things, and therefore, his message is for us!

Branch

But wait! What is this? Even as we expect for “the day” to destroy us in chapter 4, we have an unexpected word. Here is something we have not seen before. It is not the grapes from the vine of God’s wrath, but the Branch of the LORD that we see. The Branch of the LORD? What is this? It comes out of nowhere. We haven’t heard about branches before, and certainly not a branch that comes from God. We need to take a look at what this branch is supposed to represent.

A branch is of course part of a tree or a vine. On a tree, a healthy branch shows the health of the overall tree. Isaiah’s branch is said to be beautiful and glorious. Spiritually speaking, Isaiah is pointing us forward to a time when the branch of the Lord will not be withered and burned from captivity and punishment. This branch is personified here. This is God’s branch. It is possible that Isaiah has in mind the nation of Israel after the captivity. God will restore her to a former glory, even a greater glory than she had in the past.

But Jeremiah and Zechariah (and later Isaiah himself) seem to take this Branch in a deeper way, in a way that the nation of Israel can only symbolize. Isaiah says, “**A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit**” (**Isa 11:1**). Jeremiah says, “**The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, 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.**” (**Jer 23:5-6; 33:15**). And Zechariah says, “**Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch**” (**Zech 3:8**). From these Scriptures we learn that this branch is a man, not a nation. He is to be a king, a ruler, and a servant. Thus, the branch in actually be symbolism of a family tree, this particular branch coming from the line of David as was the covenant promise, “**The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own**

body, and I will establish his kingdom... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." (2 Sam 7:11-12, 16).

In one of the most famous passages in the New Testament we hear Jesus saying these words, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (Jn 15:1-4). In other words, Jesus is proclaiming that he is the branch foretold so long ago. The kingdom foretold was *his* kingdom.

The phrase "the Lord's branch" tells us what many people think is a genealogical lineage. **But this lineage tells us of the *divine* origins of the branch.** This branch comes from God. The next part of this verse, says, "The fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel." Learn to read the poetry. Notice how "the fruit will be" is parallel to "the branch of the Lord will be." Notice also that the branch is said to be two things (beautiful and glorious) and the fruit is likewise said to be two things (the pride and adornment of the remnant). Because it is in poetic parallel with the first, and because there seems to be no logical reason why it is put here if it is talking about the nation or physical harvesting, it is probable that the "fruit of the earth" is also describing a person, the same person as the branch. Whereas the branch is the Lord's, the fruit is the earths. Thus, it is quite possible that here we have in this one verse both the eternal and the human family tree of Jesus Christ. Do you see how these things are actually revealed in the Old Testament? Amazing!

Skip ahead to [verses 4-6](#). What we are going to do now is to see Isaiah's vision through the lenses of other Scripture. If you want to grow in your walk with God, you need to move beyond proof-texting "how-to's" and begin to see the organic relationship that connects each book with what came before it. We must be learning to understand the depth of one Scripture by comparing it with others.

Specifically let us look at the last part of [verse 4](#). Here Isaiah talks about the "spirit of judgment" and the "spirit of burning." **It is a curious thing to me when I read people who make it their life's goal to *not* see God in a place where he so obviously is.** Just as many people do not want to see the branch in this text as being Jesus Christ (for fear that it did not originally mean this), so too they want to prevent this spirit from being the Holy Spirit of God. Such a view is short-sided and it divides the Scriptures into little isolated compartments that have nothing to do with each other, almost as if man alone and not God himself wrote this book. Do we really believe that God does not want to tell us about his Son and his Spirit as often as possible? They are only our only hope after all.

Spirit

The Hebrew word for "spirit" is *ruach*. The word can mean "wind" or "breath" or "spirit." I am of the opinion that one of the reasons the wind ([John 3](#)) was created by God in this physical realm is in order to teach us about the ways of the Spirit of God. Now, sometimes *ruach* really does mean wind and only wind. But this is a text that is deeply poetic and futuristic and God centered. In commenting on this passage, one man said, "'spirit' [here] almost serves to introduce an abstract concept... [so it would be] appropriate to translate [it] 'through the process of burning and judgment¹.'" To think that Isaiah is talking about a mere wind (or a process) rather than the spirit of burning and judgment is to very subtly depersonalize punishment and to make redemptive history into a random series of cause and effects with little to no interaction from God.

¹ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 148.

But we have very good reasons for taking *ruach* here as the Holy Spirit. Verse five begins by mentioning how God is going to “create.” Spirit and creation. Sound familiar? Is it not safe to say that here we have the prophet alluding to the first two verses of the Bible? “In the beginning God **created** the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:1-2).

It gets better. Here is an interesting verse to dwell on: **Genesis 3:8**. Most often it is translated in this way, “The man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool (the *ruach*) of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” I don’t know how many of you have ever bothered to look at the Hebrew of this verse. But it is really quite interesting. Consider three words. “Cool” is the word *ruach*: “breeze, wind, spirit,” as in the “Spirit” of God was hovering...” The word for sound (*qôl*) is the word “voice” and the voice of the Lord (unless it is a still small voice) is a phrase often used in the rest of the bible to describe the judgment of God. “Day” (*yom*) as in the “*ruach* of the day” is of course an often used word in the Genesis 1 narrative even as it is here in Isaiah: “Day of the Lord.”

Meredith Kline asks a question that I want you to think about now. Given the traditional interpretation, “Are we really prepared to accept the anthropomorphism of the Lord’s seeking the relief that might be afforded by the evening air from the burden of the [hot] day?”² In other words, when you read this translation have you ever wondered 1) why God needed relief from the hot sun and 2) why such a “momentous primeval judgment would have transpired just coincidentally to what began as an idyllic stroll?” The context of Genesis 1 and the words that symbolize judgment (voice of the Lord, the spirit of the day – the day of the Lord) leads Kline to offer another quite different translation to this verse. “They heard the sound of Yahweh God traversing the garden as the Spirit of the day.’ The frightening noise of the approaching Glory theophany told them that God was coming to enter into judgment with them.”³

Isaiah is talking about the future, our future. But he uses the Garden of Eden with its very first “day of the Lord” to get his point across. But then Isaiah uses the nation of Israel and the way that God was with her in blessing to describe how this day of judgment and burning is going to bring forth a new creation. Isaiah knows his Old Testament!

Look at what he says next. “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. And there will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.”

First of all, **glory** (*kabod*) is a term that is often times used to represent the presence of God as he is in the person of the Holy Spirit, so clearly it is the Holy Spirit who comes in judgment and burning who now comes in glory to be a canopy and a shelter of protection. **Exodus 40:34** says, “The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” In the same way, God also filled the temple, “the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple” (1 Kings 8:11).

Now, notice all of the exodus imagery given here. “Assemblies” is one. The word first comes into popular usage in the bible during the exodus. Whenever the congregation came together in the desert for worship, it was called a holy assembly. It is from this idea that the Greeks got *ekklesia*, or what we call “the church.”

² Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 103.

³ *Ibid.*, 106.

You have the **cloud by day** and the **flaming fire by night** mentioned. You do not get any more "exodus" than this. "By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night" (Ex 13:21-22).

You have **smoke**. Listen to how the voice of the Lord and the smoke are put together by Moses in the story of the Ten Commandments. "Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him" (Ex 19:18-19). After the commands come we read, "When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear" (Ex 20:18).

There is the idea of the "shelter," the same word for **booth** (*sucah*) or **tabernacle**. Instantly we are again transported back to the desert, to the creation of the tabernacle, to the feast of booths, those little temporary huts that were to house the people of God as they made their journey to worship God for a week.

In recalling the exodus in chapter 4 Isaiah is pointing out to God's current people how He was with their ancestors in the midst of their wanderings. God never left them, but dwelt with them – though never in their direct presence so as not to consume them. But on this Last Day God is going to be with his people in their direct presence. This time, he will not come upon the mountain of the law in glory, but to Mount Zion. He will fill the whole earth with his glory. Does not the author of Hebrews have Isaiah in his mind when he writes, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Heb 12:22-24)?

God is going to be with his people as their shelter, their refuge, their protection. This is thoroughly biblical imagery here. "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart" (Ps 91:4). "The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Ps 18:2). "But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you." (Ps 5:11). Even the storm and rain imagery is important. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and 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" (Isa 43:2).

All of this happens to a very specific group of people. Up in [verse 3-4](#) we read, "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. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst." I cannot ever let a chance like this escape. I want you to see how very important the doctrine of election is to the foundation of all of your hope.

This people that God is making here is one that he calls holy and this holy people is identified as those who are recorded for life in Jerusalem. This group is called in verse 2, "the **survivors (remnant) of Israel**." Do you see how man is not doing any of this? God does it all. It is his remnant. He makes them holy. He records them for life in Jerusalem. It is simply vital for you to grasp this concept, for if this is not true, then none of these promises can be guaranteed to anyone. Do you see how God is the one who washes away the filth of the daughters of Zion (a reference to the previous chapter) and purges the bloodshed of

Jerusalem from her midst? This all comes about by the Branch and the Spirit who protects his people from the coming storm.

But now, here is the thing. Here is what you need to be learning to do if you want to grow up in your faith. Do you see how this short passage is so thoroughly biblical? Isaiah isn't giving his own version of things. Rather, he is using what has come before to bring it to more light. Isaiah recognizes that only God's word is life, and so he uses God's word to fashion and form more of God's word! There is this strange dance that takes place in the bible. It seems that anywhere we go in the Scripture, we must go back to the beginning. And yet, everywhere we go in Scripture always points us forward to the end.

The relevance to you is just this. It is very easy to miss because you may still be looking for a completely different answer. **You may not yet see what any of this has to do with the opening of this sermon.** What we have just done is grabbed a glimpse of God and his plan. We haven't ourselves planned anything. What we have done for these past few moments is merely begun to understand and think about God. **And this is the chief end of man.** But it may not "feel" relevant to you. That's very probably because you have taken your own eyes off of the your source of life. You are so busy worrying about the "how-to's" that you miss it when God is actually growing you and speaking to you.

There is something that I find quite regularly when I meet with people. I have noticed it for many years now. Why is it that in the midst of talking about God, of learning about each other as we fit into his plan, of sharing our hopes and dreams and struggles and fears and work experiences and family life and even our current learning of God that we so often yearn for more? Why can't we see that the process is the point? I believe it is because we so often are looking for the wrong things. If we cannot understand how God works, then we are not going to be satisfied even when he does and this is a dangerous place to be in, for it means that we do not have the spiritual eyes to see.

Isaiah's vision of the future is relevant to you and I because it is a present reality in our present lives that we cannot escape by going to work, by eating lunch, by mowing the lawn, by going to a ball game, by changing a kids diapers, by learning our ABC's, or by anything else. It totally consumes us everywhere we go. We don't have to reach up to get it. It isn't nearer to us when we are praying or when we are not praying. This is the reality of it. We have been washed as Isaiah's says. Our bloodshed has been taken away if we trust in Christ. We are being protected by the rock of our salvation when we are depressed because we can't find a job or when we are in a job that we don't like. We are sheltered from life's pain when someone dies that is close to us or when we break our foot or when we can't get a boyfriend. We are covered by the Holy Spirit of God when we have to travel a lot or when we are staying at home with our kids. What, pray tell, can be more relevant than this? God with us? Immanuel. God for us? Who can be against us? Christ in us, our hope of glory.

Jesus prayed, **"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world"** (Jn 17:24). This is our purpose in life, friends. This is Isaiah's vision. It is the most relevant thing in all the world. **Would for God to give us eyes to see this profound truth and to be still enough to hear his still small voice so that he might teach us what it means to be creatures made for him, made for this earth, and made for eternity.**

ZEC 3:8 " `.

6[12] Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: `Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD.