

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 4

The “first” verse of this chapter (⁻²³⁰¹⁻Isaiah 4:1) seems more properly to belong to the preceding chapter, which declares such a scarcity of men, through the destruction of them in war, there predicted, that there should be seven women to one man; who, contrary to their natural modesty, would make suit to him; and, contrary to custom, propose to provide their own food and raiment, only desiring to be called by his name. After which, (⁻²³⁰²⁻Isaiah 4:2), follows a prophecy of Christ, who is described by his names, the branch of the Lord, and the fruit of the earth; and by proper epithets of him, as such, beautiful, glorious, excellent, and comely; and by the persons to whom he is so, the escaped of Israel, to whom various blessings are promised; as the sanctification of them, the source of which is their election, and the means of it the spirit of judgment and burning, (⁻²³⁰³⁻Isaiah 4:3,4) and the protection and preservation of them, by the Lord’s creating, as for Israel of old, a cloud of smoke to rest upon them by day, and a shining of flaming fire by night, and by being himself a tabernacle to screen them from heat in the day, and a place of refuge to cover them from storm and rain, (⁻²³⁰⁵⁻Isaiah 4:5,6).

Ver. 1. *And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, &c.*] Not in the days of Ahaz, when Pekah, son of Remaliah, slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand men in one day, (⁻⁴³⁰⁶⁻2 Chronicles 28:6) as Kimchi thinks; for though there was then such a destruction of men, yet at the same time two hundred thousand women, with sons and daughters, were carried captive by the Israelites, (⁻⁴³⁰⁸⁻2 Chronicles 28:8) but in the days of Vespasian and Titus, and in the time of their wars with the Jews; in which were made such slaughters of men, that there were not enough left for every woman to have a husband; and therefore “seven”, or a great many, sue to one man to marry them, contrary to their natural bashfulness. It is a tradition of the Jews, mentioned both by Jarchi and Kimchi, that Nebuchadnezzar ordered his army, that none of them should marry another man’s wife; wherefore every woman sought to get a husband; but the time of this prophecy does not agree with it:

saying, we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; which used to be provided for wives by their husbands, and that according to law, (⁴²¹⁰Exodus 21:10) but rather than be without a husband, they promise, in order to engage him to marry them, to provide food and raiment for themselves, by their own labour. The Arabic version adds,

“neither in anything will we be troublesome:”

only let us be called by thy name; let us be married to thee, let us become thy wives; for upon marriage the woman was called by her husband’s name:

to take away our reproach: of being unmarried, and having no offspring: or it may be rendered in the imperative, “take away our reproach”^{f84}; so the Targum, Septuagint, and Oriental versions. The words may be accommodated in a spiritual sense to some professors of religion, who lay hold on Christ in a professional way, but spend their money for that which is not bread, and live upon their own duties and services, and not on Christ, and wear their own rags of righteousness, and not his robe; only they desire to be called by the name of Christians, to take away the reproach of being reckoned Pagans or infidels.

Ver. 2. *In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious,* &c.] When the beauty of the Jewish women shall be taken away, and their men shall he slain; by whom is meant, not the righteous and wise men left among the Jews, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra; nor Hezekiah; which is the sense of some, as the latter observes: but the Messiah, as Kimchi, and so the Targum, which paraphrases the words thus,

“at that time shall the Messiah of the Lord be for joy and glory;”

and the Septuagint understand it of a divine Person appearing on earth, rendering the words, “for in that day God shall shine in counsel with glory upon the earth”; and so the Arabic version. Christ is called “the branch”, not as God, but as man, not as a son, but as a servant, as Mediator; and it chiefly regards his descent from David, and when his family was very mean and low; and a branch being but a tender thing, it denotes Christ’s state of humiliation on earth, when he grew up as a tender plant before the Lord, and was contemptible in the eyes of men: and he is called the branch “of the Lord”, because of his raising up, and bringing forth; (see ³⁰⁰⁸Zechariah 3:8 6:12 ³²¹⁵Jeremiah 23:5 ²⁹¹⁰Isaiah 11:1) and yet this branch became “beautiful”, being laden with the fruits of divine grace, such as

righteousness, reconciliation, peace, pardon, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life; as well as having all his people as branches growing on him, and receiving their life and fruitfulness from him: and “glorious”, being the branch made strong to do the work of the Lord, by his obedience and death; and especially he became glorious when raised from the dead, when he ascended up to heaven, and was exalted there at the right hand of God; and when his Gospel was spread and his kingdom increased in the Gentile world, as it did, both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem, the time here referred to; and which will he in a more glorious condition in the last days; and now he is glorious in the eyes of all that believe in him, and is glorified by them; and when he comes a second time, he will appear in his own and his father’s glory, and in the glory of the holy angels.

And the fruit of the earth [shall] be excellent and comely; not the children of the righteous, as Jarchi; nor *ydb[atyrwa*, “the doers of the law”, as the Targum; (see ^{<4813>}Romans 2:13) but the Messiah, as before, as Kimchi well observes; called “the fruit of the earth”, to show that he is not a dry and withered, but a fruitful branch, and which should fill the earth with fruit; and because he sprung from the earth as man, and was the fruit of a woman, that was of the earth, earthly; and so this, as the former, denotes the meanness of Christ in human nature, while here on earth; and yet he became, as these words foretold be should, “excellent”: he appeared to be excellent in his person as the Son of God, and to have a more excellent name and nature than the angels, and fairer than the sons of men; to be excellent as the cedars, and more excellent than the mountains of prey; to have obtained a more excellent ministry than Aaron and his sons; to be excellent in all his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and particularly in the fruits and blessings of grace, which grew upon him, and came from him; (see ^{<4833>}Deuteronomy 33:13-16) “and comely”, in his person, as God and man, in the perfections of his divine nature, and in the fulness of his grace; and so are his people, as considered in him, who are made perfectly comely, through the comeliness he puts upon them: and so he is

for them that are escaped of Israel; not beautiful and glorious; excellent and comely, in the view of all men, only them that believe, who have seen his glory, and have tasted that he is gracious; these are the remnant according to the election of grace, the preserved of Israel, the chosen of God, and precious, who were saved from that untoward generation, the Jews, and escaped the destruction of Jerusalem, and were saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Ver. 3. *And it shall come to pass, [that he that is] left in Zion, and [he that] remaineth in Jerusalem, &c.]* These are the persons to whom Christ appears beautiful and glorious, excellent and comely, who will be left, and remain in Zion and Jerusalem; by which is meant the Gospel church, or church as in the latter day; in which these shall continue, abide by the truths and doctrines of the Gospel, and the ordinances thereof, and persevere unto the end; even when Christ shall take his fan in his hand, and purge his floor of the chaff; when the filth of the daughter of Zion shall be washed away by the spirit of judgment and burning, as in the following verse (^{2304b}Isaiah 4:4); when it shall be a shocking and shaking time in the churches, and the hour of temptation shall come, that shall try those that dwell upon earth; these shall be pillars in the temple of God, that shall never go out. The doctrine of the saints' final perseverance is held forth in these words, as their sanctification and election are in the following clauses, which secure it to them: they

shall be called holy: in the original text it is added, "unto him"; either the person left, it shall be said to him, that he is holy or rather the branch; and Kimchi interprets it, "because of him"; for these are accounted holy, through the imputation of the holiness of Christ unto them; and they are really and inherently holy, through the grace of Christ implanted in them; they are called to be holy, to be saints, and they are called with a holy calling, and unto holiness; and, in effectual calling, principles of grace and holiness are wrought in them, and which appear in their lives and conversations. The principal meaning seems to be, that those who shall hold fast their profession, and hold out, and persevere through the trying dispensation in the latter day, they shall be remarkably holy; they shall shine in the beauties of holiness; holiness shall be upon their horses' bells, and they themselves shall be holiness unto the Lord, (^{334d}Zechariah 14:20,21) (^{2338b}Isaiah 35:8 60:21 ^{2487b}Joel 3:17)

[even] everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem; or, "everyone that is written unto life"^{f85}, that is, unto eternal life, as the Targum paraphrases the words; and it is the same with being ordained unto eternal life, (^{4138b}Acts 13:48) or predestination unto life, which is a writing of the names of God's elect in the book of life: this writing is God's writing, it is his act and deed, the act of God the Father, and an eternal one, flowing from his sovereign will and pleasure, and is sure, certain, and unfrustrable; what is written is written, and can never be altered; and election being signified by writing names in a book, shows it to be

particular and personal, not of nations, churches, and bodies of men, but of particular persons; and that it is irrespective of faith, holiness, and good works, and entirely unconditional; it is of naked persons, and not as so and so qualified; and that it is distinguishing of some, and not others, whom God has an exact knowledge of, and calls by name: and this writing is “unto life”, or “lives”, as in the original text; not to a temporal life, but to a spiritual and eternal one; in consequence of which, such become living, holy, and persevering Christians in Jerusalem, in the church of God, and shall be admitted into the New Jerusalem, and none else, (~~617~~ Revelation 21:27) and so Jarchi interprets it, everyone that is written to the life of the world to come, or to eternal life, shall be in Jerusalem; and the Targum adds,

“and he shall see the consolation of Jerusalem;”

from hence it appears that election is the source and spring of holiness, and the security of the saints final perseverance, (~~680~~ Romans 8:30) and is not a licentious doctrine, but a doctrine according to godliness; holiness is a fruit and evidence of it; whoever are written or ordained to life become holy; and these being brought to Zion, remain there, and persevere unto the end.

Ver. 4. *When⁸⁶ the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, &c.]* By Zion is meant the church of Christ in general, his mystical body, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, written in heaven, (~~822~~ Hebrews 12:22) and by her “daughters” particular churches, that go by the name of Christian churches, who are called the reformed churches, being such as are separated from the church of Rome; among whom there is a great deal of “filth”, and which will be removed in the latter times of the Gospel dispensation; by which are designed all false doctrines, such as are contrary to the deity and sonship of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Spirit; which derogate from the grace of God in election, justification, pardon, and salvation; which detract from the blood of Christ, and deny his imputed righteousness and satisfaction; and which exalt the power and free will of man, and tend to impurity and licentiousness; these will all be removed, and the true doctrine, which secures the glory of each divine Person, asserts the free grace of God, salvation by Christ, the operations of the Spirit, and influences and engages to holiness of life, will take place. This filth likewise includes all false worship; all ordinances and institutions of men; all corruptions in the ordinances of Christ, baptism, and the Lord’s supper; all forms and modes of worship that are not of God; all offices and

officers, except bishops and deacons, which are of the man of sin; and all immorality and profaneness; and all wicked men, even all that offend and do iniquity, shall be taken out of Christ's kingdom and churches; there will be a thorough clearing of his floor of all filth, dirt, and chaff.

And shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof; that is, of the daughters of Jerusalem, particular churches, of which the Jerusalem above is the mother; for this is not to be understood literally of the city of Jerusalem, nor of the blood of Christ, and his servants, shed in it, purged away by the burning of it by the Romans; but of the bloodshed and persecution in Protestant churches; for a spirit of persecution has prevailed in some of them, but this shall be no more seen in the latter day; Christ's kingdom will be a peaceable kingdom, and of the peace of it there will be no end; as there will be no war in a civil sense, so neither in a religious sense; all animosities, disputes, and contentions, will cease; (see ^{<330>}Isaiah 9:7 11:6-8,13) and much less will there be any effusion of blood on account of religion, nor any that shed it; as the Targum paraphrases the words,

“and they that shed innocent blood in Jerusalem shall be removed out of it:”

it is added,

by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning; the Targum is,

“by the word of judgment, and by the word of consummation or perfection;”

by the former is meant a judicious spirit, which the Lord will give to his churches and ministers; a set of ministers will be raised up, having the everlasting Gospel, which they shall freely, fully, and openly preach unto all men; by which means the churches will be cleared of all false doctrines; clear and distinct light will be given to all the preachers of the word; the watchmen shall see eye to eye; and all Zion's children be taught of God; and this shall be universal all the world over; there will be a discerning of spirits of men and doctrines, whether of God, or not; by which good doctrines will be distinguished from bad ones, and good men from the wicked; and this will be part of the judgment which will be given to the saints of the most High, and will proceed from the Spirit of God; who will be poured out in a plenteous manner to guide the churches into all truth, as it is in Jesus; and by the latter, “the spirit of burning”, is meant a burning

flaming zeal; a zeal according to knowledge, against all false doctrine and worship, and for the pure doctrine and worship of Christ; which will appear in Christian ministers and churches, and also in Christian magistrates, who will hate the whore, and burn her flesh with fire; and who will be stirred up by the preachers of the Gospel to pour out the plagues on the antichristian states, (^{<6616>}Revelation 15:6,7 17:16) and when the fire of God's word will burn up all the wood, hay, and stubble, which the day will declare; and then will be the trying winnowing time, and those that are left will be holy unto the Lord.

Ver. 5. *And the Lord will create on every dwelling place of Mount Zion, &c.]* That is, on every particular church of Christ in Gospel times, and especially in the latter day; which are the dwelling places of Father, Son, and Spirit, and of believers in Christ. The word ^{f87} used signifies a place well fitted up, and prepared, and established, and settled; and such will be the churches of Christ in the latter day glory; they will be fitly framed together and built up, a habitation for God, through the Spirit; they will be beautified, and made glorious, and will be established upon the top of the mountains, and be tabernacles that shall not be taken down, whose stakes and cords shall not be removed and broken, (^{<412>}Ephesians 2:21,22 ^{<317>}Isaiah 60:7-13 2:2 33:20) and so will be sure dwellings, and quiet resting places; and happy will those be who will be the inhabitants of them, since they will have the best of company, the best of provisions, and all health and prosperity, (^{<3218>}Isaiah 32:18 12:6 33:24):

and upon her assemblies; or "her convocations" ^{f88}; in allusion to the holy convocations and solemn assemblies of the Israelites at their festivals, (^{<621>}Leviticus 23:2,3,4,7,8,21,24,27,36) which are the churches of Christ, as before, consisting of men called by the grace of God, with a holy calling; called to be saints, and so are an assembly of saints, (^{<1807>}Psalms 89:7) called by means of the Gospel, as the Israelites were by the blowing of the trumpets, to assemble together, to hear the word, and attend every part of divine worship, (^{<4412>}Numbers 10:2,3) and as the invisible church is called Zion, and the general assembly, (^{<8122>}Hebrews 12:22) so particular visible churches are called assemblies, (^{<2121>}Ecclesiastes 12:11 ^{<311>}James 2:3) and which will be very numerous in the latter day, and well attended.

A cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; alluding to the Lord's going before the children of Israel in the wilderness, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night; and to their being

upon and covering the tabernacle, when it rested; and also to the cloud and smoke that were upon Mount Sinai, when the Lord was present there, (^{<0130>}Exodus 13:20,21 19:9-18 ^{<0015>}Numbers 9:15,16) and as a cloud was frequently a symbol of the divine Presence, both in the Old and in the New Testament, (^{<0209>}Exodus 19:9 40:34,35 ^{<0362>}Leviticus 16:2) (^{<1030>}1 Kings 8:10 ^{<0375>}Matthew 17:5) so it may here signify that the presence of God with his churches in the latter day will be very manifest and remarkable; he will be seen over them, and be the glory in the midst of them, (^{<0315>}Zechariah 2:5 9:14) and it may also denote the gracious protection of the churches by Christ from all their enemies; as the cloud stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians, when they passed through the Red sea, and secured them from them, (^{<0249>}Exodus 14:19) as well as a cloud, is refreshing and protecting from heat, as Christ then will be from heat of every kind. (See Gill on "^{<2045>}Isaiah 4:6"). And as the pillar of fire was to give light to the children of Israel, and direct them in their passage through the wilderness in the night time; so Christ will be the light of his people, by the very great illuminations of his spirit, and the clear preaching of the Gospel, which will give both light and heat; and from both which will arise such a bright shining light, as shall drive away the night of affliction, darkness, desertion, and sleepiness, which shall precede this glorious day. (see ^{<2301>}Isaiah 60:1,2) and this will be all the Lord's doing, a work of his almighty power, and therefore signified by a "creation"; it will be a new, strange, and marvellous work; wonderful in the eyes of the saints, and in the eyes of the world, that those who have been forsaken and hated should be made an eternal excellency, and the joy of many generations, (^{<2305>}Isaiah 60:15 65:17,18):

for upon all the glory [shall] he a defence; the glory of the churches in the latter day will greatly consist in the presence of God and Christ; in the pouring forth of the Spirit upon them; in the purity of Gospel doctrine, worship, and discipline among them; in the holiness of their lives and conversation; and in the peace, harmony, and unity, that shall subsist with them; and the defence of this glory will be partly the ministers of the Gospel, in the pure administration of the word and ordinances, as means, but principally the Lord himself, who will be a wall of fire about them, and will appoint salvation as walls and bulwarks to them, (^{<0315>}Zechariah 2:5 ^{<2301>}Isaiah 26:1).

Ver. 6. *And there shall be a tabernacle*, &c.] Christ, who tabernacled in our nature, and is the minister of the true tabernacle, which God pitched, and not man; who will be spiritually present in the word and ordinances,

where the shepherds pitch their tents; and who will be that to his people as shepherds' tents are to them, to which the allusion is:

for a shadow in the day time from the heat: from the heat of a fiery law, which works wrath; from the flaming sword of justice, which calls for vengeance; from the wrath of God, which is poured forth like fire; from Satan's temptations, compared to fiery darts; and from the violence of persecution; for there will be no more after the last struggle of the beast, and the slaying of the witnesses:

and for a place of refuge; until the indignation be over and past: as Christ is a refuge for sensible sinners to flee unto for safety, from avenging justice, and the wrath of God; so he is a place of security, and has his chambers of safety for saints, from all dangers, and from every enemy, (~~2361~~ Isaiah 26:20,21):

and for a covert from storm and from rain; from the blast of the terrible ones, the antichristian powers, which will be as a storm against a wall, (~~2370~~ Isaiah 25:4) this will be the hour of temptation, which will come upon and try them that dwell upon the earth, from which Christ will preserve his faithful ones, (~~66810~~ Revelation 3:10 ~~23312~~ Isaiah 32:2).