

# Holy Trinity Bible Study – Isaiah 4:2

Primary Sources:

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer

Discuss the interpretation of 4:2.

## Chapter 4

<sup>2</sup> In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.

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### 1. What is the day of the branch of the Lord?

“In some later OIJ Testament books ‘the Branch of the LORD’ or simply ‘the Branch’ is used as a technical term for the Messiah... Here, however, it seems best to take the full-grown plant, in conjunction with what follows, as a general image of the LORD’s saving purposes come to fruition and on display for all to see on the last day.”

*Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 51*

“In itself ‘branch’ is a ‘family tree’ metaphor. In Jeremiah, ‘the branch’ is ‘for David’ or (better) ‘of David’s’. Only here do we have ‘the LORD’s branch’. The Messiah springs from a dual ancestry as he belongs in the ‘family tree’ of both David and the Lord. The human side of his ancestry is taken over here by the metaphor the fruit of the land/‘earth’ pointing to the Messiah as arising out of this created order”

*Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 65*

Additional Notes on interpretation of “branch of the Lord” from Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 66 & 67

The phrases the Branch of the LORD and the fruit of the land have received 5 primary interpretations:

(a) **Vegetation**. Both phrases express Messianic abundance (cf. 30:23–26; Je. 31:12; Ho. 2:21–23; Am. 9:13–15). Sin diminished and restricted the natural world (Gn. 3:17–19), but when sin is removed nature will be renewed and released. (So, Calvin, Skinner, Kissane, Scott and Kaiser.) Against this is the consideration that the four nouns, ‘adornment’, ‘glory’, ‘pride’ and ‘beauty’ seem somewhat excessive as descriptions of (mere) vegetation. 28:5 suggests a

more exalted reference.

(b) **Remnant and vegetation**. The Branch refers to the faithful remnant of Israel, just as 5:7 speaks of the people as a vineyard (cf. 60:20; 61:3). The fruit is the Messianic abundance. (So Barnes and Mauchline.) There is an awkwardness about this, however. The single verb in the sentence requires that both Branch and fruit are 'for' the survivors. How can the remnant be for the remnant?

(c) **Salvation and vegetation**. The Branch is the Messianic salvation which the Lord makes to sprout after the judgment, and fertile vegetation is the accompanying sign (cf. 45:8 which has the same verb). (So Orelli and Leupold.) As a view this cannot be faulted but why, in the light of the 'Branch' references in Jeremiah and Zechariah, should only Isaiah be allowed as vague a notion as 'the Messianic salvation'?

(d) **Messiah and vegetation**. Birks sensibly sees that there is no reason to detach Isaiah's reference to the Branch from those in Jeremiah and Zechariah. So here the Branch is the Messiah and the fruit is the plenty he brings. Note the same balance between person and plenty in 11:1–5, 6–9.

(e) **Messiah**. As compared with the foregoing, to allow both phrases to refer to the Messiah gives the four impressive nouns the personal reference which alone seems to accord with their weight. The parallelism, says Alexander, requires that the Branch springs from the Lord just as the fruit from the earth; and Delitzsch compares Ezekiel 17:5, where a Davidic king is described as a 'seed of your land' and urges that 'Branch' as a Messianic title is an Isaianic coinage fully in keeping with chapters 7–11. Young notes the use of *všāmaḥ* in 2 Samuel 23:5. The choice ultimately is between views (a) and (e). The idea of the Messianic plenty, rich though its overtones are, falls short of the dimensions of the verse, whereas on the wholly Messianic view the wording of the verse is given full rein and the imagery is true to wider biblical usage. The Messiah's double ancestry is thoroughly Isaianic.

Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (pp. 66-67). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.