

“Hope in Times of Despair” Isaiah 4:1-6

Context: Isaiah, as a prophet of God, served as His prosecuting attorney by declaring His indictment against Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Kings Uzziah through Hezekiah. In chapters 2-5, Isaiah revealed God’s judgment on Jerusalem for (1) self-indulgent values, (2) irresponsible leadership, and (3) self-absorption of their women. In the midst of these indictments comes another revelation about the remnant. Isaiah brings hope to the remnant in the midst of the despair that surrounds them through God’s promise of blessing. Isaiah uses “in that day” to introduce the stark contrast hope for a period of the Lord’s incomparable blessing in verse two with the despair of His unrelenting retribution in verse one.

1. Hope for life restored – Isaiah 4:2-3

Isaiah uses *tsemach*, poorly translated as “branch,” to signify the life-giving presence of the Messiah, whose regenerative presence accounts for the works of graceful beauty, worth, and adoration described in agricultural terms as fruit. The works are expressed through the redeemed people of the covenant, symbolized as the remnant of Israel returning from exile. Here is hope for those who rely upon His power to persevere in holiness in the midst of the consequences of sinful living that surround them.

2. Hope for eternal refuge – Isaiah 4:4-6

Isaiah 4:4 makes clear that “that day” when blessing comes begins when all that is sinful in Israel is removed, whether it is thought, word, or deed. The creation of clouds and smoke by God signifies that He brings into existence an unveiling of His protective presence, which envelops His people. Using the extremes of weather, Isaiah depicts the supreme protection of God’s presence against even the most uncontrollable forces known. Here is hope of refuge eternal.

Study questions:

- Sometimes different interpretations of a text are sourced in a word having an obscure meaning in a verse, such as “branch” in Isaiah 4:2. As a **Bible study method**, look up Isaiah’s use of the word “branch” in a concordance and then in TWOT (#1928a contrast #1408a & 1022b, cf. Isaiah 11:1; 60:21). Why would Isaiah use different words? Does Isaiah draw on any earlier Scriptural references? How do other prophets after his time understand the word’s meaning (cf. Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8)? What interpretation best fits the context? How does your opinion agree or conflict with the three major interpretations? How would the hope of the remnant apply to you (hint: think “branch or growth” i.e. Romans 11:17-27 cp Isaiah 59:21ff)?
- Isaiah 4:3 states that the remnant “will be called saints...and recorded for life in Jerusalem.” Is Isaiah referring to Jerusalem in the Messianic Age, the New Jerusalem in the age of ages, or both? Look up footnote 10 addressing ‘**On Last Things**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org (cf. also. Revelation 3:12 Isaiah 65:18). Are there any similarities in reasons for despair in Revelation 3:12 and in Isaiah’s context? How does one get named to enter the new city in both contexts?
- Look up the sheep/goat judgment in Matthew 25:31ff, the *Bema* seat judgment in I Corinthians 3:12ff, an unnamed judgment in Revelation 20:4, and the great white throne judgment in Revelation 20:12. Does Scripture reveal any of these judgments as corresponding to the epoch of “that day” in Isaiah 4:4-6? What encouragement do you find in the hope of the removal of sin from you and the existence that surrounds your life (cf. Revelation 21:2-4)?

Transformation exercise:

Reflect on Isaiah 4:4-6. Is there anything causing you or someone you love despair? What place does sin have in the situation, either in bringing despair because of the injustice or in despair from the guilt of a bad response? What would finding shelter and protection in God look like biblically as a response? Take it to prayer (Revelation 3:8-12).