

## Isaiah 3-4

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### “Cease Ye From Man”

When pondering the beginning of any of the Isaiah chapters, it is helpful to see what just preceded it. Chapter breaks were inserted many years after Isaiah wrote the text. Instead of introducing a new theme, these sections are often simply a continuation of what went before. With that in mind, when we read verses 1-4 of chapter 3, where Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will remove all of the leadership from Jerusalem, we see the prophecy in the context of the last line of chapter 2:

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils:  
for wherein is he to be accounted of? (Isa. 2:22)

Although Isaiah prophesied to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, to the tribes that would become “lost” after their captivity to the Assyrians, and to Judah and Benjamin, and those who had escaped the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom, the beginning verses of chapter 3 are delivered expressly to the Jews, and prophesy of their future conquest by the Babylonians. In breath-taking detail, Isaiah is able to see forward to different time periods and view the various peoples, their conquerers and their rulers, the small and the great, and prophesy for the group, as well as for the individual.

Following their deliverance from the Assyrians under King Hezekiah (and the prophet Isaiah), the Jewish people developed an almost superstitious belief that they could not be conquered. They placed great faith in their leaders, in the promise that a ruler from the tribe of Judah would sit on the throne until the Messiah came (Gen. 49:10), in the promise to David that his throne would be established forever (2 Sam 7:13), and in the protection they received as God’s covenant people, and from the temple in their midst. We may be able to relate to these feelings as Latter-day Saints when we reflect upon the promise given us that the priesthood, the gospel, and therefore, the Church, will never again be taken from the earth (see JSH 1:69). We also have a similar culturally-held belief about the Salt Lake Temple, which we repeat to one another and say that that temple will stand until the Millennium. That belief is derived from a statement Brigham Young made that he “want[ed] the temple to stand through the Millennium” (*Journal of Discourses* 11:372). It is easy to take such a statement, and through repetition, change it to suit our own needs and desires.

All of the covenant promises, ancient and modern, were conditional upon the obedience of the people. While it is true that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would come through both Judah and David, the line of direct descendant kings was broken due to the unrighteousness of many of the kings, who, like Manasseh, came to the throne through right of lineage, but corrupted the people’s faith and obedience through his own evil example.

The temple was the visible sign that the Lord dwelt amongst His people, but when they brought false idols and perverted practices into that sacred dwelling, His Spirit had to withdraw, and the

temple became an empty shell that could not protect them from the consequences of their behavior.

To make matters worse, while Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lehi and others were prophesying of destruction, false prophets were also raising their voices in the name of the Lord Jehovah, offering the people false hope and assurance (see Jer 28). No wonder the Lord counseled them to “Cease ye from man,” for the people needed to rely on the pure Source of Truth, and receive revelation for themselves to know where their path should lead. As a consequence of their reliance on “blind guides,” the Lord proclaimed:

For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts,  
doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff,  
the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.

The mighty man, and the man of war,  
the judge, and the prophet,  
and the prudent, and the ancient,

The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor,  
and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.  
(Isa 3:1-4)

This is a sweeping and wholesale movement; the prophet and the honorable man, Lehi, would be led away from Jerusalem, the counselors, like Daniel, would end up in a foreign king’s court, and the mighty men of war would be taken away from Jerusalem in chains, if not killed. Ezekiel, the prophet, would minister amongst the captives, and only the weakest “children and babes” would be left to guide and lead the people - and most often into foolish alliances and rebellion.

In addition, the “stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water” that represent so clearly the Living Water and Bread of Life Who is Jesus Christ, would also be removed. The Lord’s presence would no longer shine from His temple.

It’s important for us to recognize Isaiah’s method of condemnation and warning followed quickly by the promise of mercy and hope. We will see this pattern throughout his writings, as illustrated below:

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. (Isa 54:7-8)

Although Isaiah’s prophecies can be seen to fit a specific time period, we must be careful not to limit them to that period exclusively. Isaiah’s prophecies have multiple periods of fulfillment, and we can read the previous verses as pertaining to the Babylonian captivity, but also to the time of Christ’s mortal ministry and the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 AD . . . and there are yet further applications and interpretations to the future.

Regarding the “stay and the staff,” Victor Ludlow adds:

In ancient Hebrew, the words “supply” and “support” (“stay and staff” in the KJV) are the masculine and feminine forms of the same root, *masen* and *masenah*. By using both forms, Isaiah seems to suggest complete destruction - spiritual, social, and physical. Thus, the prophet’s language and imagery carry many implications beyond the threat of physical famine.

The threat of physical famine is most obvious. Removing the staff or support from a nation is analogous to suddenly taking away the props or stakes of a tent - the tent collapses shapeless on the ground.

“The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water” might be taken literally, since at both the first and second desolations of Jerusalem, the city was besieged and was at the mercy of a devastating famine. Jeremiah records in the seventh century BC that “the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land” (Jer 52:6). The famine was probably even worse during a second siege in 70 AD, for the ancient historian Josephus records the story of one woman, gone berserk from the ravages of war and famine, who roasted and ate her own child (*Wars of the Jews* 6:3).

The warning of a spiritual famine is also implied in verse 1, since the symbols of bread and water often represent Christ, his gospel, and the Atonement. He is also the “stay” and the “staff” of ancient Israel (see Amos 8:10-12). Indeed, the Lord is referred to as the spiritual support or “stay” of Israel throughout the Old Testament . . . The Lord is also associated with the Good Shepherd in the twenty-third Psalm, verse 4: “thy rod and thy *staff* they comfort me (italics added). (*Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, Poet*, p 101; hereafter referred to as *IPSP*).

In reference to the “children and babes” who would rule over the people, we turn to the actual time of the Babylonian conquest when 25 year-old Jehoiakim sat on the throne of Jerusalem as Nebuchadnezzar approached with his army. Victor Ludlow states:

At first Jehoiakim served Nebuchadnezzar to avoid violence, but he later rebelled, whereupon Nebuchadnezzar “slew such as were in the flower of their age, and such as were of the greatest dignity . . . He also took the principal persons in dignity for captives” (AOJ 10:6). After Jehoiakim’s death, his son Jehoiachin, age eighteen, ruled only three months before the Babylonians struck again (*IPSP*, 102).

Although we can see literalism in the prophecy of the youth who misruled Jerusalem at the time of crisis, we have learned that Isaiah’s prophecies are still being fulfilled, and yet to be fulfilled, and look to our own day, when those who have gained wisdom through their years and experience are viewed as “old, out of touch, and useless,” while the “selfie” generation sets the standards of our time.

Isaiah repeats the concern about foolish and childish behavior in verse 5 in typical chiasmus pattern (more on this to follow), and we might feel that like Moroni, Isaiah is specifically viewing our day, and giving warning:

And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another,  
and every one by his neighbour:  
the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient,  
and the base against the honourable, (Isa 3:5)

Isaiah prophesies that in the dearth of leadership, people will look to one another and select a ruler based on the possessions left to them, such as clothing, while those who are chosen for such honor will decline to rule in such a “ruin” (see Isa 3:6-7).

In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer . . . (Isa 3:7)

It is interesting that the specific role of being a healer is refused, when we consider the baptismal covenant to “bear one another’s burdens,” etc. (Mosiah 18:8). As emphasized in last week’s lesson, the basic Christian principles are lived by how we treat one another, how we look to the poor, and “the fatherless and the widow” (Isa. 1:17). One might look around today and see the numerous “latchkey kids,” the single mothers, the divorced, the widowed, and the many who are in nursing homes, and ask the same questions; will we seek “justice” and “righteousness” as Isaiah emphasizes, or will we turn our faces away, and look to others to take care of the problems of modern society? Ancient Jerusalem turned these problems over to their immature and self-centered rulers; are we doing the same today?

President Dieter F Uchtdorf counseled the priesthood brethren about the need to heal others. His words may pertain as readily to the sisters of the Church as they do to the men:

Brethren, if we truly follow our Lord Jesus Christ, we must embrace a third title: healer of souls. We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God are called to practice “the healer’s art.”

It is our job to build up, repair, strengthen, uplift, and make whole. Our assignment is to follow the Savior’s example and reach out to those who suffer. We “mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.” We bind up the wounds of the afflicted. We “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”

As home teachers, we are healers. As priesthood leaders, we are healers. As fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands, we should be committed and dedicated healers. We carry in one hand a vial of consecrated oil for blessing the sick; in the other we carry a loaf of bread to feed the hungry; and in our hearts we carry the peaceable word of God, “which healeth the wounded soul” (April 2013 Conference, Priesthood Session).

Victor Ludlow identifies the chiasm that verses 1-8 form in the following manner:

Theme	Outline	Verse	Quotation
The Lord will judge and condemn His people	A	1	"The Lord doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah . . ."
Loss of physical sustenance; no food	B	1	"The stay and the staff"
Loss of military defense; no soldiers	C	2	"The mighty man and the man of war"
Loss of social order; no leaders	D	3	"The honorable man and the counsellor"
Incompetent youthful rulers; roles reversed	E	4	"And babes shall rule over them"
Social injustice and oppressions	F	5	"The people shall be oppressed, every one by another"
Children rule adults; role reversed	E	5	"The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient"
Desperate dearth of leadership in society	D	6	"Be thou our ruler and let this ruin be under thy hand"
No one to heal the soldier's wounds	C	7	"I will not be a healer"
No physical sustenance	B	7	"In my house is neither bread nor clothing"
The chosen people destroyed	A	8	"Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen . . . their doings are against the Lord"

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### "The Show of Their Countenance Doth Witness Against Them"

Through Isaiah, the Lord declares the reason for the destruction that will come upon His covenant people:

For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen:  
because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord,  
to provoke the eyes of his glory.

The show of their countenance doth witness against them:  
and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.

Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. (Isa 3: 8-9)

See the footnote, 9b for “sin as Sodom” to cross-reference to Gen. 13:10-13, where the footnote for 13b has “TG Homosexuality.” Note the emphasis in Isaiah’s verse is that “they declare their sin . . . [and] hide it not.” As inferred by Victor Ludlow, below, the men of Sodom were seeking to recruit others to their practices; there was no sense of shame or desire to change in their behavior. As Ludlow states, this condemnation has application for any perversion of sexuality.

Victor Ludlow explains:

What is the reason for Judah’s destruction? She had sinned openly and flagrantly before the eyes of God, just as the Sodomites did when they proclaimed their unnatural lust direct and unabashedly to Lot’s face (Gen 19:5). Also, Judah had degenerated to a condition of sin not unlike Sodom’s (though not as depraved), in that she had perverted sexuality through misusing it in the idolatrous fertility rituals of the Canaanites. Though this was done to insure productivity in the land, Isaiah warns that the wicked participants will reap only destruction, while the righteous will ‘eat the fruit of their doings’ (v 10). (*IPSP*, 105-6)

We live in an age when people proclaim their most private and perverted deeds on Facebook, talk shows, and video. Modern cult TV shows glamorize “alternative lifestyles” that include anything but a traditional family of father and mother . . . and they are having a tremendous influence on our society, who seem to believe that the numbers of people following a certain trend legitimize it.

How does any society reach such a state? Is it not through the influence of faulty leaders, leaders the populace choose to set up for themselves? How often are the most daring, the ones who disregard the rules, and walk along the edge of the cliff, set up for the awe and admiration of others? We see it repeated throughout the ages, beginning in first grade, extending to the sporting field, and on through the political arena. This must be the very thing the Lord warned us against when He said: “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” (Isa 2:22) After all, is it not God who put the breath into the nostrils of man, who breathed life into him? Yet, so often we turn away from God to follow after the spurious teachings and actions of the lowly creature.

Isaiah underscores these points once again in verse 12-15, by repeating for the third time the Lord’s indictment against the leadership of the people:

As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.  
O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err,  
and destroy the way of thy paths.

The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.

The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people,  
and the princes thereof:  
for ye have eaten up the vineyard;  
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces,  
and grind the faces of the poor?  
saith the Lord of hosts. (Isa 3:12-15)

The three-fold repetition should cause the reader to recognize the seriousness of the indictment. The Lord Himself acts in the double-role of advocate (pleading) and judge. He “stands up” to accuse the “princes” or leaders of having consumed their people (the vineyard), and spoiled (or pillaged) the poor who were in their stewardship. This is reminiscent of Ezekiel’s charge that the shepherds who were to have offered protection for the Lord’s sheep, had instead, eaten them, and clothed themselves with their wool (see Ezek. 34).

King Mosiah warned his people:

Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law - to do your business by the voice of the people.

And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction . . . (Mosiah 29:26-27).

These are eternal truths spoken of by prophets throughout the ages. When the majority choose that which is evil, destruction will come. Isaiah is telling his people that destruction is inevitable, and he warns us that it will recur with us if we do not take heed and learn from those who have gone before us.

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## The Daughters of Zion

Isaiah 3:12 states: As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. Victor Ludlow explains;

Isaiah repeats his earlier warning of social upheaval, suggesting that the leaders will be weak as or will actually be women, an insult in ancient Israelite culture. This implies a dissolution of the traditional patriarchal social structure that was the norm of the time (*IPSP*, 106).

How does the verse have application to our time, to our situation today, where there is little regard for a patriarchal order? In point of fact, it seems to be the goal of many to completely abolish it from society. Many self-appointed or cult-appointed leaders today profess that women don’t need men at all, and fathers, in particular are becoming marginalized.

[singlemotherguide.com](http://singlemotherguide.com) reports that:

About 4 out of 10 children were born to unwed mothers. Nearly two-thirds are born to mothers under the age of 30.

Of all single-parent families in the U.S., single mothers make up the majority.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, out of the 12 million single parent families in 2013, more than 80% were headed by single mothers. Today 1 in 4 children under the age of 18 - a total of about 17.5 million - are being raised without a father and nearly half (45%) live below the poverty line.

It seems clear that the Lord pays particular attention to His daughters. An old Jewish proverb states that “God counts the tears of His daughters,” and President Thomas L Monson reaffirmed that proverb in his talk “The Lighthouse of the Lord,” October 1990 Conference. This truth is particularly evident in the following scriptures:

Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people  
because of them that dwell in a far country . . .  
For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt;  
I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?  
Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? (Jer 8:19-22)

We see feminine symbolism often when it comes to the measure of covenant-keeping. The whore of Babylon that John saw in his Revelation will not bow her head to covenant with God (see Rev. 17). The adulterous Bride of Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, has broken her covenant. Isaiah also describes mutinous and proud Daughters of Zion who symbolize the decadence of Israelite society (note the following uses the New American Version Bible, as suggested by Victor Ludlow):

Moreover the Lord said,  
Because the daughters of Zion are proud,  
And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes,  
And go along with mincing steps, And tinkle the bangles on their feet,

Therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs,  
And the Lord will make their foreheads bare.

In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands,  
crescent ornaments, dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, headdresses, ankle  
chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets, finger rings, nose rings, festal robes,  
outer tunics, cloaks, money purses, hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans, and veils.

Now it will come about that instead of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction;  
Instead of a belt, a rope;  
Instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp;  
Instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth;  
And branding instead of beauty. (Isa 3:16-24)

Victor Ludlow adds:

Isaiah’s cataloging of the ornaments stylistically mimics the excessive and vulgar



fashions of the day (*IPSP*, 107).

How do the women's fashions of our day correlate to Isaiah's vision? How do the Daughters of Zion today represent commitment to covenant?

President Joseph Fielding Smith said of this passage:

Isaiah, one of the great prophets of early times, saw our day, and he described the conditions that would prevail among the "daughters of Zion" in these latter days . . .

Now, in this modern day, Isaiah's prophecy has been and is being fulfilled . . .

The standards expressed by the General Authorities of the Church are that women, as well as men, should dress modestly. They are taught proper deportment and modesty at all times. It is, in my judgment, a sad reflection on the "daughters of Zion" when they dress immodestly. Moreover, this remark pertains to the men as well as to the women. The Lord gave commandments to ancient Israel that both men and women should cover their bodies and observe the law of chastity at all times (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:172-174).

Victor Ludlow explains further:

In addition to creating an imaginative and convincing picture, the prophet intimates the conditions under which the finery will be removed. Verse 24, for example, includes several distinct consequences of invasion and destruction: the stink replacing sweet smells could refer to the decaying flesh of those slain by the enemy; a shaven or bald head, sackcloth, and branding traditionally mark those taken into captivity. In short, these women who delight in their immodest exposure are rewarded with indecent and rude exposure at the hands of the Babylonian conquerors, who molest and rape, thus discovering "their secret parts" (Isa 3:17) [*IPSP*, 108].

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## A Few Good Men

Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.

And her gates shall lament and mourn;  
and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying,  
We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel:  
only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach (Isa 3:25-4:1).

Victor Ludlow explains these verses:

In their humiliated state, the women have abandoned coquettish, alluring tactics for a direct, pragmatic approach befitting their desperate situation. The ratio of seven women for every man probably indicates a markedly high death rate

among men, perhaps a result of the war described in Isaiah 3:25-26. Or, a higher ratio of men might exist during that period, but because of increased sterility among the men (perhaps through radiation) only an average of one man for seven women would be capable of removing the women's "reproach." Barrenness, the reproach these women wish to escape, was the greatest curse that could befall women in ancient times, since bearing children was their only means of honor (Gen 30:22-24; Luke 1:24-25).

Another prophet, Wilford Woodruff, on December 16, 1877, received a vision of the desolation that would come; his vision includes a specific reference to Isaiah 4:1:

"I had been reading the revelations . . . [when] a strange stupor came over me, and I recognized that I was in the Tabernacle at Ogden. I arose to speak and said . . . I will answer you right here what is coming to pass shortly . . . I then looked in all directions . . . and I found the same mourning in every place throughout the Land. It seemed as though I was above the earth, looking down to it as I passed along on my way east and I saw the roads full of people principally women with just what they could carry in bundles on their backs . . . it was remarkable to me that there were so few men among them . . . Wherever I went I saw . . . scenes of horror and desolation rapine and death . . . death and destruction everywhere. I cannot paint in words the horror that seemed to encompass me around. It was beyond description or thought of man to conceive. I supposed that this was the End but I was here given to understand that the same horrors were being enacted all over the country . . . then a voice said 'Now shall come to pass that which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet "That seven women shall take hold of one man saying &C"' (*Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, June 15, 1878, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City). (*IPSP*, 109).

While President Woodruff's vision revealed a more desperate time than that in which we are currently living, I cannot help but see the awful circumstances under which families are currently disintegrating, even amongst Church members, as covenants are broken, and more women are left to fend for themselves and the needs of their family members. Men who honor the priesthood are becoming fewer, and perhaps we may see application even today in Isaiah's prophecy that seven women would wish to be under the protection of a worthy priesthood leader, providing their own bread, caring for their own financial needs, but recognizing the value and blessing of priesthood leadership. "Take away our reproach" can also be seen in terms of the loss of priesthood in the family home, in which case, we see the terrible consequences that have come from the desire to abolish the patriarchal order, spoken of earlier.

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## Millennial Glory of Zion

In typical Isaiah-style, the text swings from awful descriptions of condemnation and destruction to mercy, light and hope. "In that day" is the phrase that alerts us to the fact that Isaiah has shifted his focus to our day, and to the Millennium, and invariably, when he speaks of Zion "in

that day,” Isaiah’s prophecies glow with promise. Such is the case in chapter 4, when Isaiah proclaims:

In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious,  
and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely  
for them that are escaped of Israel (Isa. 4:2).

Donald and Jay Parry explain the meaning of “branch”:

This word may have a double meaning. First, the Lord is called *Branch* messianically (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-17; Zech. 3:8-10; 6:12-15). Second, an offshoot of the house of Israel is often called “a righteous branch” (Jacob 2:25) or “a branch of the house of Israel” (1 Ne. 15:12; 2 Ne. 3:5). The context of this section suggests that the *branch* represents a specific remnant, or *branch*, of Israel that remains in Israel after God’s judgments, identified in Isaiah 3 (*Understanding Isaiah*, 47-48).

Victor Ludlow adds:

In contrast to the barrenness described in verse 1, everlasting physical and spiritual fruitfulness will abound. In ancient Hebrew, the word for “branch” is also a symbolic name for the Messiah, who will spring forth from the line of Jesse and, at this second coming, appear in all his glory. He will be spiritual food (fruit) for the “escaped of Israel,” or the scattered remnants of that royal house. . . . the “fruit of the earth” that blesses the survivors of Israel probably represents the blessings of the restored gospel. Centuries ago John Calvin saw in this verse a promise that “a New Church shall arise” created by Jesus Christ himself (*Calvin Commentaries* 1:152-53). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded by the Lord and bears his name, and therefore should be the “pride of Israel” (*IPSP*, 109-10).

Perhaps the prophecy also has relevance to the vision that John had of the Tree of Life, and its leaves and fruit that have the power to heal the nations (see Rev. 22:2). Surely, those who “escape” the scourges of the last days and are safely delivered into the Millennium will enjoy the blessings of the earth, whose curse has been removed, and can finally bear forth in “excellence.”

We will study more on “the Branch” when we reach Isaiah 11.

And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion,  
and that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy,  
even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:

When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion,  
and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof  
by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

And the Lord will create upon very dwelling place of mount Zion,  
and upon her assemblies,  
a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night:

for upon all the glory shall be a defence.

And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat,  
and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain (Isa. 4:3-6).

Israel, who is the Bride of Jehovah, left His protection, and did not abide under His watchful care. From the time that the Lord called Israel out of Egypt, He demonstrated His own faithfulness by all that He offered through His covenants. His very presence was made real to them through the sign of the cloud and the pillar of fire. He established His home amongst them in the form of the tabernacle, which later became the temple, reassuring them that He was there, with them, and they were His own "peculiar treasure" (Ex. 19:5). But, as stated above, Israel polluted the temple, and went after the ways of the worldly societies that surrounded her.

It is the Lord that makes one holy. We can not cleanse ourselves of our sins, or just "begin again" as if we had never transgressed against Him without using His Atonement. And so it is that in order for the promises of the Millennial Zion to come to pass, the Lord Himself will have to "wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion," and all of Israel. He shall purge His people through judgment, and through the Holy Spirit (of burning).

Victor Ludlow explains:

In the images of this final passage we see a tying together of the old traditions and their new forms in the restoration that, again, closes the circle of history and the pattern of these chapters: "Washing away the filth of the daughters of Zion" and "purging the blood of Jerusalem" recalls the ancient sacrifices in which the burnt offerings were rinsed to remove impurities, the cleansing atonement of Christ, and washings and anointings. In finally bringing all these elements together, the Lord will create the New Jerusalem, Zion. The Hebrew word here, *bara*, connotes an absolute creation or salvation through him who is the "author of salvation" (Heb. 5:8-9).

The all-encompassing nature of this restoration is also suggested by the cloud of smoke and pillar of flaming fire that will cover and protect "the whole area of Mount Zion." In ancient times, a single pillar of smoke and fire rested only over the Holy of Holies, which was approachable by the high priest alone. Now, under the tabernacle or wedding canopy, the remarriage of Yahweh and his people, promised and prophesied in Isaiah and throughout the Old Testament, will be consummated at last (*IPSP*, 110).

Much of Isaiah is spoken in first person, as if the Lord, Himself, is dictating the message, undiluted, to Isaiah. As He stands up to plead for - and against - His people, Jehovah sees the end from the beginning. He knows what will become of His work, and of His people:

To whom then will ye liken God?  
Or what likeness will ye compare to him?

Have ye not known? have ye not heard?  
Hath it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? (Isa. 40:18, 21)

There is chastisement, yes, for the broken covenant, but there is also hope and mercy. The delicately balanced arc between scattering and gathering, wounding and healing, are constantly at work in the Savior's proclamations, and constantly portrayed in Isaiah's poetic writings. Zion will be established in the tops of the mountains, and her individual dwellings will become familial temples for those who dwell safely, at last, in the presence of the Lord.