

ornaments and apparel which meant so much to the women of Judah, those of Israel who escape are not to continue to find their satisfaction in material things, but in the wonderful "Branch of the Lord." They are to be washed and cleansed from their sins and to be holy unto the Lord.

### **The Branch of the Lord**

This phrase "the branch of the Lord" and its parallel "the fruit of the earth" are susceptible of three types of interpretation. The first would be to take them in a strictly literal sense, as saying that orchards and vegetable gardens will be beautiful, glorious, excellent, and comely for those who are escaped of Israel. The people's glory and pleasure are to come from agriculture rather than from vain adornment. This interpretation is certainly unsatisfactory. It is hardly worthy of the grandeur of the context to think of mere agriculture as what is here described.

A second method of interpretation is to take the first phrase, "the branch of the Lord," as a figurative reference to the Lord Jesus Christ and take the second phrase, "the fruit of the earth," in its literal meaning as referring to agriculture. The third method of interpretation would be to take both of them as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The whole tone of the context makes it seem rather unlikely that it is simply agriculture which is meant. The previous verse tells of the great lack of men in the land, and we would expect this verse to describe some way in which those women who are true to the Lord are to be recompensed for this great loss. The remainder of the chapter tells of wonderful blessings which are to come and these seem to be unrelated to mere agricultural prosperity, but rather to have their emphasis on spiritual matters and on divine protection from evil. In view of its use in later books it is easy to show that it is possible to consider the phrase "the Branch of the Lord" as referring to the coming Messiah.

In the King James Version (K.J.V.) eighteen Hebrew words are sometimes translated "branch." The one used here occurs in the Messianic predictions in Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15. In both of these instances the word is used to describe a man, the divinely sent king of the Davidic line. The passages show