

Isaiah 3-4

"Punishment & Purification"

Ch's 2-5 are a proclamation of punishment & purification toward Judah & Jerusalem. & If while we're reading through it you find yourself thinking, "Man, this seems harsh!" You're correct. It is. Jesus said it like this, "*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*"¹

It's a great privilege to be a nation chosen of God to be the light of the world. To share w/& show to the world the word & the ways of God. To enjoy a particularly close relationship w/God. & Great privilege carries & creates great responsibility. There's no other nation upon the face of the earth that has been founded on the basis of knowing & glorifying God... w/the exception of the U.S. (Which is why [in my mind] the U.S. will be judged of God more harshly than any other of its contemporary nations).

Much like ancient Israel, rather than be a light to the nations around us, we've welcomed, walked in & adopted the ways of darkness... Israel had more light than any other nation, & when the light is rejected it brings greater judgment.

Now, I realize that the subject of God's judgment isn't a popular one, but it's a biblical one so let's look *at* it, learn *from* it that our lives might be changed *by* it. Make no mistake, God judges sin...

Vs1-7

You get the idea, don't you? God is telling them that their *condemnation* will be felt in the form of *deprivation*. The judgment that God is going to visit upon the nation will be by the means & after the manner of shortages. God will extract from them everything that they depend *on* & take confidence *in*.

Now this may be new information for some of you. One of the ways that God will bring judgment upon a nation is through the shortage of supply... But I want you to pay attention here because not only will there be a shortage of food & water (the stock & the store, the whole supply of bread & the whole supply of water), God tells them that He's also going to punish them by creating a shortage of *competent leadership* over the nation.

Everything they look *to* or take confidence *in*... be it militarily, civilly/politically, spiritually, socially & economically, God's going to take it away & leave them w/weak, incompetent leaders that create such a mess that *no one* wants to be responsible for it. The results of which will impact the entire nation.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Lk 12:48). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

(People will protest being put in power even over ruins...) God says He's going to take away the mighty man, the man of war, the judge, the prophet, the diviner, the elder, the captain of 50 & the honorable man. He's also going to remove the wise counselor & the skillful artisan as well as the expert enchanter... **Of course, the diviner & enchanters were already forbidden by the law, but they were seeking after & placing confidence in them anyway, so God says, "I'm taking them to!" Any semblance of competence would be taken & incompetent, incapable, weak & foolish leadership would be left in its place.**

The fulfillment of this is found in 2nd Kings Ch 24 when Nebuchadnezzar carried the nation off to Babylon. We read, **"Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land."**² It continues on. **"And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."**³

Ladies and Gentlemen: I try very hard to separate the pulpit & politics. God hasn't called me to hop up on a political soap box but to preach the gospel of J.C. Political persuasions can be very divisive, but I've discovered that when a person's heart/mind is transformed through the redeeming work of the cross of J.C. all those other things get worked out.

Having said that, when text forces the focus upon it, I won't shy away from it... God is saying that *one way* that He may bring judgment upon a nation is to curse them with incompetent/ungodly leaders... He simply gives the people what they want! What their wicked hearts desire! – **& Don't be deceived & think that if that happens, it'll be immediately recognizable due to something like extreme poverty. Incompetency can be put in power in the midst of extreme prosperity! Let's not forget what we read in Ch 2 about this time that Isaiah is speaking into.** Look back at Vs 7 of Ch 2 **(7-8)**. – Economically, militarily, technologically, things were booming!

So the *effects* of such judgment may not be sensed *immediately*, but they certainly *will be* apart the repentance of such a nation & the mercy of God. (Some people wonder what relevance the Bible has for today, ladies & gentlemen, this should be speaking to the U.S. right now!)

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Ki 24:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Ki 24:15-16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& I'm not even referring to any *one* political party. I'm simply saying, where is the competent leadership in our nation? In our civil system, in our churches? – In the political realm you'll hear the phrase, "trickle down" effect. But the truth is (much to our shame), when it comes to those who rule over us, we have a "trickle up" effect. Our leaders are the expression of our own hearts, God gives the nation what it wants.

You want someone to say ungodly activity is ok, or that sin is acceptable? You want a leader who will approve of reprobate lifestyles & legitimize illegal & destructive activity? You got it! You want a government that will incentivize you not to work & inject 9 trillion dollars into the economy in "stimulus" checks? Print over 20% of all the money that's existed in our nation since its inception in 2020 alone? Let's do it! Approximately 20 (give or take) food distribution plants have burned to the ground in this country this year already (speaking of shortages, you're not hearing about, but you may feel it before long)... Let's not get started on our energy shortage, then let's blame the hyperinflation all on Putin & the Russian/Ukrainian war... Where is the competent leader?

Sometimes I wonder how our nation can be so blind. I wonder how people can really see, think & believe the way they do. But it's an expression of the judgment of God. (& I know that it's not popular to speak this way, & I'm in danger of being branded as some kind of religious, right wing conspiracy nut or whatever. But I challenge you. Read Rom 1. & When you realize that when a people reject their Creator. God [in His judgment] will give them over to a "debased mind" & then give them the leaders that they want [as we're reading here] suddenly, the math starts adding up.) Societal breakdown, open flagrant flaunting of sin. What was at one time shameful is now celebrated & put on every kind of movie or kid's show in order to normalize & desensitize people to what the Scriptures identify as sin! & It's all done under the banner of "freedom". But liberty is not license. People have perverted the freedoms & liberties we've been given & now you're the bad guy, you're the oppressor because you want to honor God & keep sin in the shameful place that it belongs.

Deprivation/devastation... "the people will be oppressed (Vs 5), everyone by another." Everyone trying to impose/enforce/inflict their ways on others & you're the bad guy if you don't agree... & No one (Vs 7) willing to take responsibility...

Vs 8-12

Ladies and Gentlemen: Don't miss this. Why would the city of Jerusalem be in ruins? Why would the nation of Judah fall?

Underline it... Vs 8, “Because their *tongue* (or their words) & their *doings* (their works) are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His glory.” This is the key. You take God out of the schools, out of the courts, out of the leadership of the nation & what you’ll have left is a people whose words & whose works are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His glory. To rebel *against* the Lord is to invite the judgment *of* the Lord.

Now, think about this. – It’s much easier to think that the things we *do* would be offensive to God, but God says here that the things we *say* are just as offensive & provoke the eyes of His glory just the same. God commands us to glorify Him by our *words* every bit as much as by our *works*. We’re to speak the truth in love. We’re to speak the things necessary for edification... Our words are to be “seasoned w/grace”. Listen, it’s our *words* that reveal our *heart* & God is always searching our heart. Jesus said, “*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*”⁴ & He said, “*I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*”⁵

Isaiah says that the look on their countenance witnesses against them, that proud arrogance of sin. “They declare their sin as Sodom, they do not hide it...” No such thing as “closet sin & shame” anymore. People flagrantly declare it, they’re proud of it.

He says, “Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves!” God didn’t have to do anything unique or special to bring this judgment upon the nation. All He had to do was leave them alone! They brought it all upon themselves! (Write it down, look it up later Ps 14:1-3). – Next time you read Vs 8 & 9 replace the word “Jerusalem” with “Washington D.C.” & “Judah” with “The United States” & see if it sounds about right... I’m not saying these words were written *about* us, but certainly they apply *to* us. –

As for the righteous, those who know the Lord, trust *in* the Lord, “Say to them, ‘it shall be well w/them, they shall eat the fruit of their doings.’” Of course, this doesn’t mean as believers we’ll never be caught in the fray. That what’s happening in the nation won’t affect us (godly people went into captivity just the same). But God sees you, He knows you & ultimately, eternally it will be well with you. The righteous will never share the same fate as the wicked. (Gen 18:25, the Judge of all the earth will do right.) So, the idea here is, “Hang on, keep going, don’t give up. Yes, it’s hard, but in the end you will reap a reward beyond anything you could ever ask or even think.”

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 12:34). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 12:36-37). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

As for the wicked? The reward of *his* hands shall be given him. Both the righteous & the wicked will be given their just reward. Be it salvation or condemnation.

He says, “As for My people, children are their oppressors, & women rule over them.” In this male, patriarchal kind of society, this would be a humiliating calamity. We know that God will at times raise up godly women (Deborah was a great leader, Esther saved the nation), but that’s entirely different than being ruled over societally. God is just telling them, what’s coming won’t be a blessing, it’ll be a curse. “Those who lead you cause you to err, & destroy the way of your paths.”

Vs 13-15

The Lord both “pleads” & “judges” His people... If you’re ever in a courtroom & the prosecuting attorney is also acting as the judge... ☺ You’re gonna be convicted & found guilty.

Rather than protecting the poor & less fortunate under their leadership, they plundered them, oppressed them & saw opportunity to enrich themselves off them. It’s bad enough to fail to help, but it wasn’t just that, they actively robbed the poor & took advantage of their poverty to enrich themselves!

Vs 16-23

Lest there be any confusion, the Lord makes it clear. It’s not just the elders or leaders of Judah who have sinned before the Lord. It’s not just the men who have a part to play in bringing about the judgment of the nation. The *women* are equally a part of the problem.

Far from esteeming others as better than themselves (as scripture exhorts us to do, assuming a position of humility) there was off the charts pride, pomp, haughtiness & conceit amongst the women of Judah. They were taken w/themselves. They had “outstretched necks & wanton eyes”.

They were consumed w/outward appearance. They would dress & move through the streets or markets in a way that drew attention to themselves. “Walking & mincing as they go, making a jingling w/their feet.” Taking those dainty little steps so that their ankle bracelets would jingle & turn attention their way... Then they would look at the men who gave them their attention w/those “wanton”, seductive/flirtatious eyes.

& I want to be clear here because the bible doesn’t teach that God doesn’t want women to look nice or dress in a fashionable way. Make up is great & all of that. It’s always about the motive of the heart.

They were dressing in such a way as to be sexually seductive & promiscuous. Their goal was to draw men into sexual immorality by flirtatious mannerisms, devoting themselves to outward appearance. (Anklets, scarves, crescents, pendants, bracelets, veils, headdresses, leg ornaments, headbands, perfumes, charms, rings, nose rings, festal apparel, mantles, outer garments, purses, mirrors, fine linen, turbans & robes...) (Maybe you're thinking, "This can't apply to me, I don't have any turbans!" 😊) & I don't know if Amazon had a marketplace there or what, but evidently there was some good shopping in Jerusalem! 😊

But listen, women play a great role in shaping the next generation. The mother's values are so instrumental in their children's lives. & When the women of a culture become degenerate & debased, it wreaks havoc on the next generation. But where there's godly conviction in the home, there's great hope for the future.

& Before we leave this section, let me say this again. It's not sin to want to look nice outwardly. But let me ask you this. In comparison to the attention you give to appearing attractive *outwardly*, how much time do you devote to developing the attractiveness of who you are *inwardly*? Peter said it like this, *"Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."*⁶ Consider balancing the scales of adorning your inward person w/the same attention to detail as you give the outward person.

When God's judgment came to Judah, everything would change. Instead of headdresses & styled hair, their "crown" would be infected scabs on their heads & the Lord would uncover their secret parts... Their obsession w/appearance, love of luxury, & their desire for promiscuity made them ripe for judgment. Instead of being seductively adorned, they would be exposed & humiliated & the Lord would take away the finery. & Of course, all was connected to the coming invasions. There would be scarcity/disease, they were raped & humiliated & all their "wonderful accessories" were taken away. They became prisoners of war, robed in sackcloth, instead of sashes they were led off by ropes. Rather than a sweet smell there was a stench & where there was beauty they would be branded... like cattle led off to a slaughter. Notice.

Vs 24-26

Notice the repetition of the phrase, “Instead of, instead of, instead of...” God will replace their captivation w/finery & pride w/the deprivation of captivity & humiliation. This is how much God detests pride & the lengths to which He will go to root it out

Let’s not fixate ourselves on outward appearance to the neglect of the inward person of the heart... All those things that we place so much time/priority on, God can take it away in a moment. – No doubt one of the reasons the women of Jerusalem loved all the luxury/finery was because it made them more attractive to men. They could “get a man” or “men” by the way they presented themselves. But God says, “Your men shall fall by the sword.” There would be a tremendous loss of men leading to complete & utter deprivation & desolation in their lives...

Ch 4

Vs 1

Maybe some guys are thinking... that doesn’t sound so bad! ☺ But the reason for there being so many more women than man is all the men would be being put to death! & It would be typical for a man to make the pledge of a dowry & promise to provide for his bride. But here they’re saying, “Look, you can have as many wives as you want, you don’t even need to provide for me, I’ll make my own way! Just let me be called by your name, take away my reproach.” (The reproach of being unmarried & childless).

Btw, in a broader application we can see here the lack of wisdom & the fact that it’s not good for women to be overly desperate for marriage. We’ve all known those who were so desperate to be married they attach themselves to the wrong person, *any* person who would “take away their reproach”. Be careful ladies to honor the Lord in considering a spouse.

& Though these things would happen historically. We also see that it’s a foreshadow of what will be fulfilled yet prophetically by those surviving the Great Tribulation, just before Christ comes back to rule & reign over the earth.

Vs 2

The Branch of the LORD is a Messianic title, speaking of Jesus Christ. “The Branch” carries the idea of fruitfulness & life (Jn 15:4-5).

Vs 3

When Jesus reigns, the fingerprint that will mark such a society is *holiness*. At the time Isaiah was writing this, the daughters of Zion may’ve been called beautiful...

Or sexy, maybe fashionable or trendy, but they certainly weren't called *holy*. But the fires of judgment bring cleansing, purging & purity. & Just to be clear, "holy" people aren't a special branch of super spiritual saints. It's people (like you & me) who have been covered & clothed in the righteousness of J.C. who desire to lead a life set apart *to* God for the glory *of* God.

Vs 4-6

& As w/the Exodus, when the Branch of the LORD reigns, there will be the tangible presence of the LORD in His people's midst. (The cloud of smoke & the pillar of fire). His people will be safe & secure, the Lord's protection will rest upon them (a refuge from heat & a shelter from storm & rain).

Listen, it's not uncommon for people to want God's constant presence & protection. But those don't come apart from His cleansing. His purification leads to restoration & reconciliation both of which are found in J.C.

The word of God is constantly pointing us to Jesus. Believe *on* Him, be found *in* Him. It's in Christ alone where we find help, we find hope & we find healing...

Prayer Points:

God, how our nation needs Your help & Your healing. We pray for our leaders, & we pray for our citizens that there be a great awakening in the world around us & a great revival in the church in the midst of us. That we walk in holiness, leading lives set apart to You, being the light in this dark world that You've called us to be. May we honor You in our works & in our words.

Maybe you're in a place whereby you're w/out hope being w/out God in the world. You've not given your life to Christ; you've not turned from your sin. You can today & you'll pass from judgment into life... if God is knocking on the door of Your heart, open it, invite Him in & let Him change your life.