

Isaiah – Chapter 3 and 4

Isaiah 3:1-3 – For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah Both supply and support, the whole supply of bread And the whole supply of water; The mighty man and the warrior, The judge and the prophet, The diviner and the elder, The captain of fifty and the honorable man, The counselor and the expert artisan, And the skillful enchanter.

REVIEW

Last week, we walked through chapter 2 and saw the glorious future when Zion is lifted up and the nations stream to it in peace. We heard the call to walk in the light of the Lord today. Then the tone shifted to the present: Judah filled with idols, pride, and foreign influences. We watched the proud humbled and the Holy One alone exalted in that day. The chapter ended with a warning not to trust in man.

All of that continues the covenant lawsuit we opened in chapter 1. Remember the big threads we are tracing: the Messianic Hope breaking through the darkness, the Motif of the City, showing Zion's shame and future glory, and the Holy One of Israel judging sin but keeping His promise.

Isaiah's mosaic pattern is clear here too. The dark judgment of chapter 3 sits right next to the bright hope of chapter 4. We see the full picture only when we step back.

Chapters 3 and 4 are tightly woven together as two movements in the same part of the lawsuit. The “For behold” in 3:1 links chapter 3 back to chapter 2. The repeated phrase “in that day” runs through both. The historical situation is identical. Together, they do this: God spells out the judgment on leaders and proud women that makes the present shame complete, then drops in a bright tile of future cleansing and glory for the remnant.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

We are still in the same time period as chapters 1 and 2, roughly 740 to 730 BC. Judah looks prosperous under Uzziah and Jotham. Borders are secure. Wealth flows in. But the rot inside is spreading. Idolatry covers the high places. Injustice crushes the poor. Leaders chase foreign help instead of the Lord. The Northern Kingdom of Israel stands but heads for destruction under Assyria. Isaiah speaks to a people who can still turn but will soon face the consequences he warns about.

EXPOSITION

Section 1: The Purge of Leaders (verses 1-15)

Chapter 3 opens with no new heading. It picks up right where the terror of chapter 2 left off. The proud will be humbled. Now we see exactly how.

Isaian 3:1-3. The Hebrew lemma for “remove” is סֹרַר (sur). It means to take away or turn aside. God is not passive here. He actively strips away every pillar of society; bread and water are first, the basics of life. Then the list of leaders: mighty men, warriors, judges,

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prophets, diviners, elders, captains, honorable men, counselors, artisans, and enchanters. This covers every level from military to judicial to spiritual to skilled workers. Nothing is left standing.

This is classic Hebrew prophetic-judgment language. The removal of Jerusalem and Judah is not total forsakenness but a temporary judgment to correct rebellion. It will not last forever. Cross-references show this pattern again and again.

Deuteronomy 28:15, 25-26 - the covenant curses include loss of leaders and supplies for disobedience.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 promises return and restoration when the people turn back.

Jeremiah 29:10-14 speaks of seventy years of exile for Judah, yet God says, “I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.”

Ezekiel 11:16-17 describes God scattering Israel among the nations as judgment, but then gathering them back “from the peoples.”

The removal is discipline, not abandonment. History bears this out: Assyria takes the North in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:6), Babylon takes Judah in 586 BC (2 Kings 25:11), but a remnant returns under Cyrus in 538 BC (Ezra 1:1-4), just as Isaiah will predict later.

Verses 4-7 show the result as chaos. Inexperienced boys rule. Oppression runs wild. Youths clash with elders. The lowly attack the honorable. No one wants to lead because the ruins are too great. The man with a cloak is begged to take charge, but he refuses. There is no bread, no cloak, no hope. This echoes the history of Judah under weak kings like Ahaz, who surrendered to Assyria and stripped the temple to pay tribute (2 Kings 16:8-9), leaving the nation vulnerable (without resources) and leaderless.

Verses 8-12 give the reason as plain rebellion. Their words and deeds defy the Lord. Their faces show it. They flaunt sin like Sodom. Children oppress them. Women rule them. This is not a general comment on gender but on the upside-down society where the unqualified lead, as in the days of Athaliah's usurpation (2 Kings 11:1-3), when a queen regent seized power and killed the royal heirs, throwing Judah into turmoil. The guides mislead. The paths are confused.

Let's get specific here. Why are their paths confused? The same word for *paths* here (אֲרָה *ōrah*) is also used in Psalms 119:9, Proverbs 2:13-15, 3:5-6, and Isaiah 2:3. They have forsaken the way of the Lord, and now they have no direction and wander aimlessly.

Now, verses 13-15 show the Lord as Judge. The Hebrew for *contend* is רִיב (*rib*), which is to “argue His case.” This is the covenant-lawsuit language we saw before. God also stands to judge. He indicts the elders and princes directly, then also judges them and brings the execution.

They have devoured the vineyard, a picture of Israel we will see expanded in chapter 5. They plunder the poor. They crush and grind the faces of the needy. This mirrors the history of exploitation under kings like Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood (2 Kings 21:16), or under Ahaz, who burned his son as an offering (2 Kings 16:3), oppressing the innocent and vulnerable in pursuit of power.

Section 2: The Judgment on Proud Women (3:16-26, 4:1)

The indictment turns to the women who embody the pride of Judah.

Verses 16-17 describe the daughters of Zion walking haughty - heads high, eyes seductive, and steps mincing (short steps that are intended to draw attention), with the tinkle of the bangles (anklets with charms) on their feet. This over-the-top description of the behavior of the women in Judah demonstrates their haughty attitude, provocative glances, proud posture, and attention-seeking behavior (including making their jewelry "sing" as they walked) and showed their inner arrogance and vanity.

This is the lofty pride from chapter 2 made personal. The Lord will humble them with scabs on the scalp, foreheads bare, and beauty turned to shame. In Judah's history, this pride reflects the luxury of prosperous times under Uzziah, when wealth led to arrogance (2 Chronicles 26:16), but judgment came through invasions that stripped away finery, as when Assyria deported the elite (2 Kings 17:6 for the North, foreshadowing the South).

Verses 18-23 list the luxuries stripped away. Anklets to veils, perfume to amulets, all were gone in that day. This echoes the historical plundering during sieges, like when Babylon later took the temple vessels and nobles (2 Kings 25:13-15). But here it is the women's adornments, symbols of wealth from trade routes that brought **crescent ornaments** from pagan sources.

In the ancient Near East, especially Canaan, lunar worship was a prominent aspect of polytheistic religions. The Canaanites, who inhabited this area before, venerated a pantheon of deities associated with natural forces, fertility, and celestial bodies. The moon god, often called Yarikh, was a key figure. Yarikh was depicted as a male deity who governed the night sky, phases of the moon, and aspects of time, agriculture, and divination. Worship involved rituals at high places, temples, or under trees, often tied to fertility cults that included offerings, incantations, and symbolic adornments.

Crescent moon symbols were central. The crescent shape represented the new moon phase, symbolizing renewal, growth, and divine power. Artifacts like amulets, pendants, and seals featuring crescents have been found in archaeological sites such as Ugarit and Byblos, indicating their use in religious practices. These items were not just decorative; they served as talismans for protection, fertility, or allegiance to the moon god, sometimes worn during rituals or as everyday symbols of devotion.

The "crescent pendants" (literally "little moons" or "crescents") are highlighted here as one of 21 items of jewelry. These were likely necklace pendants or amulets shaped like crescent moons, worn around the neck or as part of anklets. By adopting such items, the Israelite women were incorporating elements of Canaanite paganism into their daily lives, blurring the lines between YHWH worship and foreign cults. This was a direct violation of the covenant, as God commanded exclusive devotion (Exodus 20:3-5) and forbade graven images or amulets tied to other gods (Deuteronomy 7:25-26). This as spiritual adultery, provoking God's jealousy and judgment.

Verses 24-26 state the stark reversals – perfume becomes rot, belts become ropes, hair becomes baldness, fine clothes become sackcloth, beauty becomes branding, men fall by the sword, gates lament, and the city sits deserted on the ground. The ultimate fulfillment came in the Babylonian destruction (Lamentations 1:1-4), where Jerusalem sat alone like a widow, her gates desolate.

Isaiah 4:1 – The phrase “in that day” here ties directly back to the judgment refrains in chapter 3 (3:7, 18) but may also somewhat refer to the eschatological period of Jacob’s Trouble. Primarily, this is about the immediate, historical judgment Judah is about to face. The scene shows the desperate aftermath of the siege and loss of men described in 3:25 – so many warriors fallen that women outnumber men seven to one. They beg for marriage, offering to provide their own food and clothes, just to remove the reproach of being childless and unnamed in a society where family line meant everything. It is the ultimate humbling: beauty and status gone, reduced to pleading for a name. Yet even this shame is not forever, as the light of 4:2 will show God's plan to restore.

Section 3: The Future Cleansing and Glory for the Remnant (chapter 4)

Isaiah 4:2 - but the “in that day” in verse 2 marks the bright tile after the darkness. This is eschatological hope, pointing to the final era when the Messiah restores all things.

Verse 2 describes the Branch of the Lord as beautiful and glorious. The Hebrew for “Branch” is **תְּמָרָה** (tsemach). It means a sprout or shoot, symbolizing the Messianic King from David's line (Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12; Isaiah 11:1).

The fruit of the land will be excellent for the survivors of Israel. This happens in the last days, when the Messiah returns to reign, as Revelation 19:11-16 shows Him as King of kings judging and making war in righteousness, leading to the new earth where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).

Verse 3 adds that whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone recorded for life in Jerusalem. This is the remnant theme. In history, a remnant returned from Babylon (Ezra 2:64-65), but eschatologically, it points to the final salvation of Israel. Romans 11:26-27 quotes Isaiah 59:20-21: “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” This occurs at Christ's second coming, when all Israel

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is saved after the fullness of the Gentiles (Romans 11:25), in the day of the Lord as described in Zechariah 12:10 and 14:1-9.

Verse 4 states the Lord will wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purge the bloodshed of Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment and burning. This cleansing is not just historical, like the reforms under Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:15-19), but final. It happens through the Messiah's work. Malachi 3:2-3 pictures Him as a refiner's fire purifying the sons of Levi. In the end times, this is the tribulation refining Israel (Daniel 12:1, 10), leading to the kingdom where Israel's sin is purged.

Verses 5-6 promise the Lord will create over Mount Zion a cloud by day and smoke with flaming fire by night, a canopy and shelter. This recalls the exodus pillar of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21-22), God's presence guiding Israel. Historically, it echoes the glory filling the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11), but eschatologically it is the eternal presence of the Messiah King, initiated in the Kingdom but fully realized in the new Jerusalem. Revelation 21:3-4 declares "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them," with no need for sun or moon because the Lamb is its lamp (Revelation 21:23). This takes place after the great white throne judgment, in the new heavens and earth (Revelation 21:1), when God wipes away every tear.

CONCLUSION

Chapters 3 and 4 together show the mosaic at work: deep darkness of judgment followed by brilliant light of restoration. The proud are humbled, but the remnant is made holy.

Look at the threads once more. The City motif contrasts Zion's shame with her future glory under the canopy of God's presence. The Holy One of Israel judges sin but washes it away for those who remain. The Messianic Hope shines in the Branch who brings beauty and protection. In our day, we see similar chaos and pride. Leaders fail. Injustice grows. But the Faithful One will restore all things, to Jerusalem, Judea, Israel, and to the whole world.