

## Isaiah 3-4 Notes

This chapter continues the themes from Isaiah 1 and 2. It emphasizes the judgment on pride, the collapse of a society and trust that is misplaced. There is however, an underlying call to repentance and hope in God.

### Verse 1-3

This chapter starts out with 'see now'. Other translations might say 'for'. This connects what we are now reading to what we read in verses 6-22 of chapter 2.

### What does it say the Lord is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah?

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The Hebrew word for 'supply' (mish'en) refers to that which serves as a protector or provider of sustenance. It is the basic physical necessities of life. 'Support' (mish'enah) refers to a support such as a walking stick or staff. Both of these words give the idea of something one leans on.

We get of list of what this means:

- Food and water
- Hero and warrior (military)
- Judge and prophet (spiritual and civil support)
- Diviner and the elder (those who provide wisdom and guidance)
- Captain of 50 and man of rank
- Counselor, skilled craftsman, clever enchanter

The Lord would remove essential elements of their society, one being the leadership including military, political, religious and commercial sectors. These were all people whom the people of Judah and Jerusalem depended on, signifying the collapse of their social structure and the loss of wise counsel.

Just like any building, society depends on structural pillars to hold it up. What happens to a building if say one of load bearing pillars or beams cracks and breaks? The whole building can crumble. It is the same way in human society. It is built on key social pillars such as supplies of basic commodities and key individuals whose skills are vital to the smooth functioning of the community. Here in this chapter, God is threatening to remove these things from Judah. Every level of leadership is being removed, leaving a flimsy structure that is sure to collapse. All of this is a direct judgment from God.

### Verses 4-5

#### Who will be put into leadership? \_\_\_\_\_

This alludes to incompetent people being put into positions of authority and power.

This verse reminds us of some of the kings who sat on the throne including wicked King Manasseh who was only 12 years old when he began to rule. Other kings that fit here include Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. These kings were unpredictable and inconsistent.

#### What will people do to each other according to verse 5? \_\_\_\_\_

- Man against man
- Neighbor against neighbor
- Young will rise up against the old
- The nobody against the honored

We see the absence of any kind of capable leadership will lead to chaos and oppression.

### **Verses 6-7**

We see things get so bad that someone who owns a coat would be pushed to step into a leadership role despite their objections. They don't want to have anything to do with leading this 'heap of ruins'.

We see the stages of Israel's decline and breakdown of national character in the first seven verses:

- Good leaders are gone (1-3)
- Young, inexperienced leaders take their place (vs.4)
- They oppress the people (vs.5)
- Society becomes divided; lack of respect (vs.5)
- Unqualified people are pushed into leadership and a spirit of despair emerges (vs.6-7)

### **Verses 8-9**

**What do we see Judah doing in these verses?** \_\_\_\_\_

Instead of bowing to God's glorious presence, they parade their sin and don't even try to hide it.

**Why is it far worse for someone to parade their sin like Sodom than for them to hide it?**

**Who are they compared to?** \_\_\_\_\_

The root cause of this judgment is the sin of the people just like it was in the days of Sodom. The word 'woe' here is not just a show of emotional sadness. It is a warning; a prophetic declaration of divine judgment. They have brought this disaster upon themselves.

### **Verses 10-11**

We see a distinct contrast in these two verses. We see the righteous versus the wicked. The righteous are the faithful remnant in Judah who walk in God's ways. The wicked are those rebelling against God through idolatry, oppression and pride.

Unfortunately, we see in the world today that the faithful suffer right alongside the unfaithful. However, their ultimate ends are very different.

Revelation 2:10-11

*"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. **11** Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death."*

## Verse 12

The people of Judah are already experiencing being ruled by inexperienced and even incompetent leaders.

**What two groups are referred to here?** \_\_\_\_\_

These two people groups would have at this time been considered the least suited to rule.

## Verses 13-15

We see here that God is the ultimate judge. He would bring judgment against the elders and leaders of His people.

**What are they being accused of here?** \_\_\_\_\_

Instead of feeding their people, they are fattening themselves.

Leviticus 19:9-10

*“9 “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God.”*

Deuteronomy 24:20-21

*“20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. 21 When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.”*

These passages show that God had made a way for the poor to be looked after, but the people were not following His instructions.

We are going to see the continuation of the Lord's condemnation of His people, but there is a change in focus. The female citizens are receiving criticism now.

## Verses 16

**What does it say about the women of Zion?** \_\_\_\_\_

They are being prideful and assuming superiority and being flirtatious attention seekers.

I Peter 3:3-4

*“3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.”*

## Verses 17-23

God will humble these women. **What does it say He's going to do?**

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God will cause the glory of these women, their hair, to fall out.

We get a list of 21 things that will be taken from them:

bangles	headdresses	nose rings	linen garments
headbands	anklets	fine robes	tiaras
crescent necklaces	sashes	capas	shawls
earrings	perfume bottles	cloaks	
bracelets	charms	purses	
veils	signet rings	mirrors	

This is a lengthy list that should show us that these women had all of this finery and luxury because of the oppression and plundering of the poor. All their finery will be snatched from them. Notice that God did not condemn their luxurious lifestyle as much as their arrogant spirit. These aren't wrong in and of themselves, but they can assume too much importance in a person's life, just like anything else.

The only beauty these women possess is a lie. It is an outward disguise of their inner corruption. When judgment comes, it will strip away all their outward adornments. In the end, their physical condition will match the ugliness of their souls.

### **Verses 3:24-4:1**

We get a stark contrast of what is going to happen to these women when judgment falls on them with five stark exchanges. God's judgment would bring about a complete reversal for them.

fragrance → stench

sash → rope

well-dressed hair → baldness

fine clothing → sackcloth

beauty → branding

### **What will happen to their men?**

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These women have lost their provider and defender. They will be completely alone.

In 4:1, it begins with 'in that day', which is a common prophetic phrase. It doesn't necessarily mean one single day, but rather a future time when God will act decisively. In this case, it will be in judgment.

We see just how bad things are going to get for these women. It says that seven women will plead with one of the few men who will be left for the honor of marriage in name only. How far they will have fallen.

The judgment Isaiah talks about in chapter 3 was fulfilled with the Babylonian invasion where the people of Judah were taken into exile. All the things described do happen to them.

However, it is not limited to that. There is also a broader picture that points beyond this one moment in history. It foreshadows the "Day of the Lord" where Christ returns for final judgment and restoration.

## Verse 2-6

Verse two says again, 'in that day'. Only this time instead of referring to judgment, it shifts to hope and renewal. Here, we get the bright side of 'that day'.

### What will be beautiful and glorious? \_\_\_\_\_

The word 'branch' here is used symbolically. Later prophets use this term as a Messianic title that points to a future king from the line of David who will bring life and restoration.

Jeremiah 23:5 *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD,  
“when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,  
a King who will reign wisely  
and do what is just and right in the land.”*

Zechariah 3:8 *“Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.”*

Jesus will be the radiance of God's glory contrasted with the darkness and wickedness surrounding the nation at this time.

The fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors. This could mean both literal agricultural blessing and/or the spiritual fruit that comes with the restoration of God's people.

We see three results in regards to the remnant in the next two verses that come after God's fire of judgment.

1. They will be holy - they belong to God and will reflect His character.
2. The Lord will wash away their filth and bloodstains
3. They will experience the presence of the Lord not as a threat, but as a blessing. God will purify His people by a "spirit of judgment" and "spirit of fire." This shows the refining work of God to remove sin and guilt and restore His people.

The final image we get in chapter 4 is of a lasting dwelling place between God and His remnant.

### What will he create by day? \_\_\_\_\_

### How about by night? \_\_\_\_\_

We see similar imagery in Exodus 13:21-22

***“21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.”***

**Compare these verses to Isaiah 4:5-6 by looking at the chart below.**

**What differences do you see?**

## Comparison

Theme	Exodus 13:21–22	Isaiah 4:5–6
Setting	Wilderness journey (leaving Egypt)	Restored Zion (after judgment)
Form	Pillar of cloud by day, fire by night	Cloud by day, fire by night, plus canopy
Purpose	Guidance for a pilgrim people	Protection, refuge, and permanent dwelling
Scope	Over the whole nation on the move	Over Mount Zion and its assemblies (remnant gathered)
Symbolism	God present with His people in redemption	God present with His people in restoration
Tone	Beginning of journey	Fulfillment after cleansing

## Contrast in Meaning

- Exodus: God's presence leads His people out of bondage toward the promised land.
- Isaiah: God's presence shelters His people after judgment, in the renewed Jerusalem.
- Exodus = salvation begun; Isaiah = salvation completed.

Isaiah reuses the cloud and fire imagery to show that just as God's presence guided Israel long ago through the wilderness, He will do so in the future as well. He will cover, protect and dwell with His purified remnant in Zion. This shows us that what began as a temporary guidance in the wilderness all those years ago, will now become a permanent canopy of glory in the new Jerusalem. Instead of travel guidance, it's dwelling protection. God's presence will permanently cover His people.

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One of the things we see from these chapters is that God doesn't intend His judgment to be the last word. Judgment isn't intended to destroy, but to cleanse. It's just a matter of if we will allow it to do so.

We also see from this passage the unchanging nature of God's plans for His people. God doesn't just want to live among His people, He wants to live in them. He wants to provide all that we need and crave. We see this from the moment of the Exodus onward. The climax of the Exodus story isn't the parting of the Red Sea or even the sealing of the covenant. Rather, it is the moment that God's glory filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:38).

If God is to dwell in us, then two things need to happen:

1. There must be a means to cleanse us from all of our sin of the past. God cannot live in a filthy temple.
2. God's character needs to be replicated in us.

In the NIV Application Commentary by John N. Oswalt, he says,

"The fact is, God is not too concerned whether we are happy or not. But he is very concerned over whether we are holy. We can be happy and on our way to hell. But if we are holy, it is only because the Holy One is at home in his temple, our hearts. So we ought to take a long look at adversity and ask what Jesus the Branch means to burn out of us so that he can take us into his tabernacle, where he abides with the Father. We should also recognize that comfort, pleasure, and security are all by-products, not ends in themselves. If we make those things primary, we will become idolaters, and we will lose those things even as we seize them. But if we make God's presence and his character primary, then comfort, pleasure, and security will fall on us all unawares."

**Do you agree with what he says here?**

### **Reflection & Application**

- **Heart Check:** Am I clinging to my appearance, status, or possessions for security or identity?
- **Surrender:** What might God be asking me to release so I can walk in humility and trust?
- **Influence:** How can I use my role and influence to point others toward righteousness, justice, and compassion?

**When we think about Christ's return, do we long not just for happiness and an end to trouble, but also for holiness and an end to sin?**