

# Security, Vanity and The Glory Of Jesus Christ

## Isaiah 3-4

As we look over the glorious end of God's work of redemption, Isaiah 4 begins on a note of shame. Verse one is really a transition from judgment oracle of Chapter 3 to the glorious future of God's consummate kingdom. Still, the transition needs to be explained as it forms the necessary backdrop to Isaiah vision of the future kingdom. We could even say that Chapter 3 is the consequence of the last verse in Chapter 2, namely, Israel's constant need to trust in man and the folly of this false assurance (2.22). Because Judah refuses to trust in the Lord, God will now move to remove her security and her vanity resulting in the national shame embodied by the desperation of their unprotected women (4.1).

### *God Removes The Security Of The Nation*

In removing the security of the nation what we find is a systematic erosion of the social order of Israel. Every quarter of the nation is brought to its knees buried under a mountain of its own guilt and shame. The deconstruction can be outlined as follows:

Economy is decimated v.1 "supply"  
Leaders are humbled v.2-4  
Society will collapse v.5  
Nation is guilty and condemned, v.8-15

We get an insight in to the historical fulfillment of this vision in 2 Kings. There it will be Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar that will deliver this death blow:

**2 Kings 24:14-16** <sup>14</sup> Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. <sup>15</sup> So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon; also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. <sup>16</sup> All the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon.

1. Economy is decimated v.1 “supply”

**Isaiah 3:1** <sup>1</sup> 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;

2. Leaders are humbled v.2-4

**Isaiah 3:2–4** <sup>2</sup> The mighty man and the warrior, The judge and the prophet, The diviner and the elder, <sup>3</sup> The captain of fifty and the honorable man, The counselor and the expert artisan, And the skillful enchanter. <sup>4</sup> And I will make mere lads their princes, And capricious children will rule over them,

Ridderbos:

“The nation thus gutted becomes a plaything of the whims of half-ripe young people who manage to rise to the top. The result is boundless confusion: all respect for age and position disappears, the old and the noble alike suffer from the mindless violence of mere boys and the scum of the nation.” (J. Ridderbos, *Bible Student’s Commentary, Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Regency Reference Library, 1985) 59)

Seeking to end the anarchy, Israel’s people panic and attempt to put leadership back in to the hands of anyone who would dare to lead at this point (vv.6-7; cf. Eccl. 10.16).

3. Society will collapse v.5

**Isaiah 3:5** <sup>5</sup> And the people will be oppressed, Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor; The youth will storm against the elder And the inferior against the honorable.

4. National guilt and contempt, v.8-15

All this because Judah’s sin was directed toward the Lord in shameless evil:

**Isaiah 3:8–10** <sup>8</sup> For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, Because their speech and their actions are against the Lord, To rebel against His glorious presence. <sup>9</sup> The expression of their faces bears witness against them, And they display their sin like Sodom; They do not even conceal it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves. <sup>10</sup> Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, For they will eat the fruit of their actions.

If Judah wants to openly embrace shame, God is ready to give it to them tenfold as God was also moved to reverse their social order. If children will not be ruled, they will rule, if women will not be protected they will be the protectors, if Judah will not stop its oppression it will be oppressed:

**Isaiah 3:12** <sup>12</sup> O My people! Their oppressors are children, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who guide you lead you astray And confuse the direction of your paths.

**Isaiah 3:15** <sup>15</sup> “What do you mean by crushing My people And grinding the face of the poor?” Declares the Lord God of hosts.

It remains true that ‘righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.’ As we go through this text, it should be a reminder to us of our own social context in America today.

### *God Humbles The Vanity Of The Nation*

The deconstruction of the nation continues with the removal and rebuke of its vanity embodied most lamentably in the pomp and pride of the nation’s women, the “daughters of Zion” (v.16) which could be directly to the women associated with the royal court of Judah. As with the rest of the nation, Judah’s women will undergo a severe series of reversals:

Beauty becomes horror, v.16-17

Possessions will become plunder, vv.18-23

Protectors will become liabilities, vv.25

Honor will become shame, 4.1

Such vanity reinforces the fact that Judah at this time was in love with itself in total narcissistic materialistic idolatry. In the words of John, they ‘loved the world and the things of the world’ and as such did not have the love of the Father (cf. 1 John 2.15-17). God will repay the sensuality of the daughters of Zion with sorrow and their laughter will be turned to gloom as their miseries begin to set in upon them. On a practical level, what a reminder the sins of Judah remain for us today (cf. 1 Cor. 10.6, 11, 18; Heb. 3.12ff.). Socially, Chapter three is a reminder of what happens when a people abandon righteousness for sin, when men refuse to stand up for righteousness and abdicate their God-given roles to lead in society and in the home, as well as the corrosive effects of materialism, sensual immodesty. If these things remain universal warnings for people everywhere, how much more the Church of the living God, where these things should not even be named among us and become of such things, the wrath of God is coming (cf. Eph. 4.1-21).

## *God Brings Beauty From Ashes And Redemption From Ruin Through Jesus Christ*

Isaiah wants to paint a picture of smoldering heap of ashes to on which sits an abandoned woman, exposed, vulnerable and disserted with no hope left. Sow to the wind, reap the whirlwind of corruption! But from this very portrait of despair, rising up out of the ashes of Judah's sin, is the beauty, glory and power of Judah's Savior, "the Branch of the Lord" (יְהוָה צְמַח). Later in Isaiah this same "Branch" or "the stem of Jesse" will be anointed of the Lord as He comes bearing the "Spirit of the Lord" (11.1-2). This then agrees with the overall testimony of the prophets, and of all of Scripture, that the "Branch" which situates us in the metaphor of David's family tree, is none other than the Messianic-Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ (cf. Jer. 23.5; 33.15; Zech. 3.8; 6.12; Rev. 5.5; 22.16). What emerges here is a profound messianic theology that moves in three stages: deliverance, judgment, and consummation. Here we will consider the first aspect of this theology, namely, *the messianic deliverance*.

### *The Messianic Deliverance*

Exegetically, v.2, is a summary of vv.3-6 as we move from deliverance under Messiah to flourishing in the new creation. The text is also Christ-centered in that the passage is all about Jesus' person and work. The first thing to see is that this is indeed a reference to the Messiah and His work:

**Isaiah 11:1** <sup>1</sup> Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

**Jeremiah 23:5** <sup>5</sup> "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.

**Jeremiah 33:15** <sup>15</sup> 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.

**Zechariah 3:8** <sup>8</sup> 'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.

But from the context, Isaiah sees the hope of Israel's from two vantage points, two perspectives, to aspects of the Messiah, His origin and His nature. Not only is this "Branch" "of the Lord" but equated with that is also another description, "of the earth" (וּפְרִי הָאָרֶץ). The latter implying that as much as the Redeemer will come from the realm of endless days (His eternal procession), He will also be identified with the world in which the people live; He will be one of them (Heb. 2.17), from

them (Gal. 4.4), and dwell in the midst of them (cf. John 1.14f). This is therefore congruent with what Isaiah will himself envision, namely the Immanuel principle where God will become a man and dwell in the midst of His people bringing salvation and peace (cf. 7.14). He is both the “Branch of the Lord” the Davidic Messiah and the “fruit of the earth” arising from the Messianic tribe of Judah.

Isaiah sees both the person and work of Jesus Christ. Who He is, the “Branch of the Lord” and what He will do, bring in a glorious redemption. To see His work however we need to see the reference here to the “survivors of Israel” (לְפִלִּיטַת יִשְׂרָאֵל) who constitute the righteous, repentant, and most significantly, the redeemed remnant of God (cf. 1.9, 27). The reference to these “survivors” also shows us the scope of the Messiah redemption. It will not extend to everyone. Only those who truly repent and truly trust in the Lord will experience the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (cf. 2.22; 6.13; Rom. 9.29). The emphasis on sovereign election here is drawn out from the historical context. It is the *Lord* who has “left us a few survivors” (1.9). This is why Paul’s teaching on election in Romans 9 highlights this very thing citing Isaiah 1.9, “unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom” (cf. Rom. 9.29). In other words, unless God by an act of free and sovereign grace decides to show mercy on us, we would have been left to die, buried underneath a smoldering heap of sin and judgment. “But God,” as Paul would put, “being rich in mercy” (Eph. 2.4); He redeems His people for His glory and to the praise of His glorious grace (Eph. 1.3-14).

The person, the scope, and now, the *result* of the Savior’s work are all here and Isaiah sees the beauty of it all. The greatness of what Isaiah gives us here is what we can call the *revolutions of redemption* for there are great and glorious reversals where things are turned over again and again. *Beauty, glory, pride, and adornment* or *honor*- all of these are powerful forces either for good or for evil. Thus far, as Chapter 3 has illustrated, Judah sought beauty and glory in their vanity and the finery of their fashions and cultural elitism. But what the people sought in the work of their own hands in sinister and sensual ways, Isaiah sees that only God can deliver in what the world promises. And more precise to his prophecy here, only as God, “in that day” that is, the day that God has appointed, the time which for Isaiah and for Judah as yet future, God would send forth His Servant the Branch who is Lord Jesus (cf. Zech. 3.8). Isaiah’s vision at this juncture foresees Jesus’ redemption mainly from the eschatological perspective of the new creation.

Although these realities were inaugurated in Jesus' incarnation, His life, death and resurrection- through which the daughters of Zion will be purged and sanctified; the reference to the pride of Israel is most probably a reference to the consummate state where Jesus and His glory will be the focal point of the covenant community in glory (cf. Rev. 21.22-23). The rest of the context would seem to support this. This is the recovery of the Lord's "glorious presence" Isaiah mentions earlier (3.8). Isaiah envisions the covenant community bedecked in the glory of their Redeemer. He sees the wayward nation set apart and pure where their ultimate ambition will be to delight in the beauty of Lord. Where vanity, materialism, and sensuality could not satisfy; Isaiah's prophecy promises more, more through Jesus Christ as He becomes the all-satisfying center. Motyer rightly points out:

In 3:18 they sought a false, transient 'beauty' ('finery', *tip'eret*) but now they discern true beauty in him and he beautifies them. The middle words 'glory' and 'pride'/'dignity' point to a great change. 'Glory' had been their destruction (2:10) and 'pride' (2:12; a related word) their ruin. Now the divine glory dwells among them (cf. on verse 5), they rightly pride themselves in him and he imparts a true dignity to them. (J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 65).

And so, Isaiah's prophecy amounts to what will later be an invitation to partake of His fulness. As Isaiah later prophecies of the same Zion-phenomenon in the new creation, he sets forth the glories of Christ when he says, "Come!":

**Isaiah 55:1-3** <sup>1</sup> "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. <sup>2</sup> "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. <sup>3</sup> "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.

Jesus, in Revelation, pulling from this text, specifies the Triune dimensions of Isaiah's text. The threefold invitation here in Isaiah probably stands behind His own invitation in Revelation 22.17, "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." Unlike, the trappings of our transient possessions, carnal vanities, and fallen beauty; here there is no excess. There is no dissipation to the enthrallment of Messiah's majesty. No end to the joy of Messiah's glory and the pleasures of God's right hand (cf. Ps. 16.11; John 6.53-58; 7.37-39).