

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #8

Isaiah 3:13-4:1

I was very interested to read this week that our President-elect is not going to forget about his “Ivy League” college connection in his appointments. It is truly sad what has happened to this institution of “higher learning.”

One of the Ivy League colleges and seminaries was originally known for proclaiming the truth of God and promoting to the students that the most important part of their lives was their relationship with God and an understanding of the Bible. In fact, when the college was first chartered, it required that all faculty members have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and promote the importance of that relationship and the Word of God to the students.

But as more students came to the school, it let down its guard. In fact, it didn't even demand that the students have any relationship with God. Little by little the college got sidetracked and began to think that knowledge of God wasn't really all that important. Faculty members were not hired anymore because of their walk with God or their profound grasp of the Scriptures, but because of their worldly or philosophical knowledge about a particular subject.

The graduates of the school became the alumni of the school and ultimately the donors to the school. They put pressure on the school to get away from the Bible and the teaching of God or else they would withhold their financial support. The school decided to give in to the pressure. One of the men who saw the evil of all of this was J. Gresham Machen. He was a professor, who appealed to its leaders to not succumb, but they refused and he resigned. The school, of course, was Princeton. Today it is one of the most God-mocking schools in the world. It has produced a plethora of religious skeptics and liberals. This same story could also be applied to Harvard. In fact, it was John Harvard who said in 1636 concerning Harvard University - “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to...lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all knowledge and learning.” But little by little the faculty drifted from God and His Word.

The same is true of Yale, Dartmouth and Columbia. These schools are now known for producing Biblical illiterates who are atheists and agnostics and religious ecumenicalists, who believe one religion is just as good as another. But you may know with certainty that there will come a day of ferocious judgment in which God will hold those leaders and educators accountable. They have mocked God and God will bring them to condemnation. You ask where do you get an idea like that? This concept comes straight out of a book like Isaiah !

God permitted Isaiah to see a time when Jerusalem and Judah would be the recipients of His ferocious wrath which she deserves to receive. Israel has rebelled in her speech and in her actions. She has flaunted her sin and God says, I'll bring you down. **Most of the terrible things Isaiah saw will ultimately occur during the Tribulation , during the final 3½ years.** When this does happen, He will bring a special judgment upon two specific groups of people that He names right here. What we see in this text is this:

JUST PRIOR TO GOD ESTABLISHING AND BLESSING ISRAEL IN JERUSALEM AND IN HER LAND (4:2-6), HE WILL SEND HIS JUDGMENT UPON HER AND WHEN HE DOES HE WILL ESPECIALLY HOLD TWO SPECIFIC GROUPS OF PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE PART THEY PLAYED IN LEADING HIS PEOPLE ASTRAY.

As we have said in these studies, I believe much that is prophetically true about Israel is presently true about the United States. I believe we have become a God-mocking nation who is experiencing some very negative things as a direct judgment of God. The same kinds of people God will hold accountable for Israel's demise are the same God will hold accountable for the demise of this country. This passage has serious ramifications for two specific groups:

ACCOUNTABLE GROUP #1 – God will judge Israel's leaders . 3:13-15

When it comes time for God to judge the people, the first specific group He will judge for all of the negative things that happened will be its leaders. Isaiah certainly was not out to win a popularity contest by what he says here but he is revealing the specific vision he saw. **In all reality, the reason a society becomes corrupt and loses its reverence for God is because the leadership has let it happen.** God will hold that leadership accountable, and specifically he names two leadership groups that He will hold accountable:

Leadership Group #1 - God will judge the elders . 3:14a

The elders were responsible for the religious and spiritual life of the people. It was their job to guide the nation into a proper understanding of the Word of God and a proper appropriation and application of the Word of God. Israel's religious leaders didn't do that and still has not done that. They became more concerned about their own traditions and man-made rules than the Word of God, and God will hold them accountable.

When we were on vacation we visited two homes - one that was in Savannah and a plantation that was in South Carolina. Turns out that both of the homes we visited were homes of men who had been ministers. In both homes were libraries and I asked the tour guide if, in fact, these were specific books of their libraries. In both places they told us they were. Naturally, since they were ministers I was interested in their books, and when I examined their libraries I concluded that these men may have been rich in worldly possessions, but their churches had to be starving for spiritual knowledge. One of the ministers had a large number of books written by Charles Darwin, a God-mocking theorist, who attacked the Bible and Christianity. The other minister had a Greek reader of Greek philosophy but no exegetical studies on the Greek text of the Bible. Neither minister had any books of sound theology or Biblical scholarship. Both of these men are now dead and both of them now know that God holds religious leaders highly accountable.

Leadership Group #2 - God will judge the princes . 3:14b

The princes were leaders who were responsible for the social and civic life of the people. These were the political leaders, who God holds accountable for leading people astray.

Politicians may think it is progressive and popular to promote all religious beliefs and religious books, but one day God will hold them accountable for mocking Him and His Word and His Son.

Now in the last part of **verses 14-15**, God holds the religious and civil leaders responsible for four reasons:

(Reason #1) - They have devoured the vineyard. **3:14c**

Instead of developing the people in the right ways, they devoured them.

(Reason #2) - They have plundered the poor. **3:14d**

Instead of protecting and providing for the people, they plundered them.

(Reason #3) - They have crushed God's people. **3:15a**

Instead of caring for the people, they crushed them.

(Reason #5) - They have grinded the poor. **3:15b**

Instead of giving to the people, they ground them up.

If you don't think this happens in politics today, just look across Lake Michigan to the state across the pond. Money that was promised to help sick children would be withheld if a politician did not get a huge sum of money. A senate seat would be sold to the highest bidder, not the one with the highest love for God. Don't kid yourself, politicians are still doing these things and one day they will face God for them.

If we look collectively at this metaphorical picture in Isaiah, what the religious and civil leaders have done is taken money from people through collections and taxes and not led them into a right relationship with God or into a proper understanding of His Word.

They have taken advantage of the people and have ruined them in some cases physically but for the most part spiritually.

There is no question that the Bible, both O.T. and N.T., clearly reveals that we, as a nation, state and church, need to be certain that we minister to the poor, not take from the poor. Materialistic oppression can occur in the world of religious leaders and in the world of political leaders. What leaders need to know is that one day God will hold them highly accountable.

ACCOUNTABLE GROUP #2 – God will judge Israel's women. **3:16-4:1**

As we near the Tribulation, it is predicted that women will become more and more self-centered, vain, loud and proud. When the Tribulation is underway and turns toward Israel, God will hold these self-centered women accountable for ruining the nation and they will become a key target of His wrath.

There can be little doubt, from a text like this, that one of the great influencing forces in any society are its women. Women were originally created by God to be a help to man, not a demeaning destructive force. A godly woman is able to help a society in a great way by her commitment to God and His Word.

However, the women Isaiah discusses here were responsible for Israel's deterioration and God wanted these women to know that He is their judge and He is going to hold them accountable. These women are held accountable by God for pulling people away from God's truth and pulling them into idolatry and for only looking out for themselves. In fact, Amos, who was a contemporary prophet of Isaiah who prophesied against Israel to the north, also prophesied against these women and called them a bunch of "cows" (Amos 4:1-3).

What is so interesting about a passage like this is that we learn that God not only monitors women, but He actually monitors how they look, what they wear, what they believe and how they behave and how they relate. The Scriptures are abundantly clear that God wants His women to be reverent, quiet and godly and He does not want them acting like some self-centered "flaunting floozy for googlers and goglers." The women of Israel were strutting around in such a way that God viewed them as obnoxious and as very culpable and during the Tribulation, these Jewish women will pay a severe price.

Now before God sends His Tribulation judgments, these are the attitudes and the type of obnoxious behavior that you may expect to see in women. But here is what makes this so tragic. You expect the women of the world to act in these ways, but this text is not addressed to the women of the world. It is addressed to supposed women of God. This is a serious judgment text aimed at women who supposedly belong to God. In this text, there are four specific types of obnoxious behavior that God names.

Obnoxious Behavior #1 - The ladies are proud in their attitudes . **3:16a**

It is not wrong for a woman to look nice and dress nice; what is evil is to be a proud, self-centered woman who hates authority and refuses to submit to it. God takes note of that.

I have been a believer since 1976. I was in theological school from 1979 to 1983. When it comes to the things of God, I have never in all of my life seen a time when, in the religious world, women have become so arrogant and proud as right now. There are women who want to run the church and do not want to submit to any authority. There are women who have elevated themselves in their own minds, to a level of arrogance for which God will hold them highly accountable. They blatantly stand up in a church as if they are skilled ministerettes who do not need a gifted man of God to open the Word.

One such woman that I personally know of actually lied to a congregation, claiming Howard Hendricks of Dallas Seminary sanctioned her ministry. I personally called Dr. Hendricks and asked him if he did and he said he never has sanctioned a woman pastor in all of his life. He told me you can quote me on that.

Wait until the day comes when these kind of women get before Jesus Christ. Her proud arrogant spirit will be leveled and she will be humbled. **God has nothing good to say about a woman who is proud.**

Obnoxious Behavior #2 - The ladies are proud in their actions . **3:16b**

There are some women who walk with their necks stretched and their heads held high. What this language means is that they walk in a very proud way; in a way that says look at me and listen to me for I am better than the rest of you.

Ever seen that in the church? I have. There always seems to be a woman or two who thinks she is better or more important than anyone else in God's family. This kind of woman struts around with head held high thinking and promoting that she is more spiritual than others beneath her. She is quick to criticize and condemn from her lofty vantage point. She presents herself as being some heavenly angelic judge, but what she doesn't know is that one day God will bring her down. Her arrogant piety will be humiliated for God will humble her.

Obnoxious Behavior #3 - The ladies were seductive in their look . **3:16c**

Women use their eyes to ogle and flirt. Women have an ability to influence some in their world through God-honoring sanctification or through self-honoring seduction . Women have an ability to seduce some men and woe to the woman who would seduce a man away from the Truth of God and His Word.

I personally know of a wife who lied against several people in a church and was publicly proved to be a liar and her husband followed her like a whipped pup right out of the church. I would hate to be that woman one day, for I guarantee you this - she will have her day in God's court.

Obnoxious Behavior #4 - The ladies were showy in their walk . **3:16d**

These women actually walked to draw attention to themselves. They would actually put bells on their feet so people would have to look at them when they walked by. **The motive of these Israeli women was not to draw people to the Lord but to themselves .**

They were anything but a godly, meek, mild and quiet woman and God would bring them down. You will notice that **verse 17** begins with the conjunction "therefore." Because these women are this way, there are six judgments God promises. These flirtatious, loudmouthed, arrogant Jewish women will become prisoners of war during the Tribulation.

(Judgment #1) - God will remove their physical beauty . **3:17**

Whenever God sends judgment against anyone, it always means big loss . No one under God's judgment gets away unscathed and part of this judgment will mean these women will get scalped. All their trips to the beauty salon to take care of their hair won't mean anything. God will literally take the beauty away.

(Judgment #2) - God will remove their beautiful jewelry and clothing . **3:18-23**

When you look down through these verses, you will notice that Isaiah is very precise in enumerating specific individual items. **What this tells us is God keeps track of the minutest detail of every single woman .**

These women were using these items to display themselves apparently as blessed women of God. Anklets, headbands, crescent-shaped ornaments (**v. 18**), earrings, bracelets - worn on arms or necks, veils (**v. 19**), headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets (**v. 20**), rings - both finger and nose (**v. 21**), robes - holiday special dresses, outer tunics, cloaks, purses - several money purses to match the dresses (**v. 22**), mirrors - they would actually carry their mirrors in their purses so they could take them out and look at themselves, undergarments - made of

exquisite material, turbans - beautiful head coverings and hats and veils (v. 23). Everything these women owned were things designed to make them physically beautiful. God says I will take every bit of this away from you and you women who once strutted around will be brought down.

(Judgment #3) - God will remove their pleasant fragrance. **3:24a**

A woman who once smelled of beautiful spices will smell like putrid stench.

(Judgment #4) - God will remove their beautiful look. **3:24b**

What was once a beauty will be ugly. No nice haircuts, no nice clothes; during the Tribulation the Jewish women will be judged and even branded; probably forced to receive the mark of the beast.

(Judgment #5) - God will remove their men. **3:25; 4:1**

In the original Hebrew, the emphasis here is on Jewish men. Israel has always been a male dominated society. According to the law, a husband was to provide food and clothing and conjugal rights for his wife (Exodus 21:10-11). When God sends this judgment, God is going to remove most Jewish men.

These women influenced many different men in a way contrary to the Word of God so God says I'll remove the men. There will be seven women left for one man, which means there are no men left to defend them, to care for them or to provide for them. If you want to know what a world would be like without men, here it is. It will be dangerous and scary if you are a woman and godly men are gone. Most Jewish men will be killed during the Tribulation and life for a woman will be anything but happy.

(Judgment #6) - God will remove all their joy. **3:26**

There will be no joy or no happiness for any woman. Jewish women will cry and mourn. They will be alone and they will feel totally deserted. These proud arrogant women won't be proud anymore. They will be totally and completely broken and it will be at this point that they will finally turn to the Lord for help (Isaiah 4:1).

When I read these verses, I cannot help but think of pictures I have seen of Jewish women during the Holocaust. Their heads were shaved. There was nothing beautiful about them. They were wearing robes which were literally held together with a rope. There were no nice cosmetics and they couldn't even take a clean bath. During the Tribulation, God will bring this kind of judgment against the women once more.

In the N.T., God warns women to make certain that their adornment is not all about the external, but the internal, developing a gentle, quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God (I Peter 3:1-6). You ladies develop in this way and you have nothing to fear.

But woe to the leader and woe to the woman who does not heed the Word of God, for one day the price that one pays will be very high.