

Holy Trinity Bible Study - Isaiah Lesson #4

Leader Notes

Primary Sources:

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer

Judgement on Judah and Jerusalem (3:1-4:1)

Chapter 3

¹ For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and supply, all support of bread, and all support of water; ² the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, ³ the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the skillful magician and the expert in charms. ⁴ And I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them. ⁵ And the people will oppress one another, everyone his fellow and everyone his neighbor; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the despised to the honorable.

⁶ For a man will take hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying: "You have a cloak; you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule"; ⁷ in that day he will speak out, saying: "I will not be a healer; in my house there is neither bread nor cloak; you shall not make me leader of the people." ⁸ For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence.

⁹ For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves. ¹⁰ Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. ¹¹ Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him. ¹² My people-- infants are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, your guides mislead you and they have swallowed up the course of your paths.

¹³ The LORD has taken his place to contend; he stands to judge peoples. ¹⁴ The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. ¹⁵ What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

¹⁶ The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet, ¹⁷ therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts.

¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; ¹⁹ the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarves; ²⁰ the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; ²¹ the signet rings and nose rings; ²² the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; ²³ the mirrors, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.

²⁴ Instead of perfume there will be rottenness; and instead of a belt, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a skirt of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty. ²⁵ Your men shall fall by the sword and your mighty men in battle. ²⁶ And her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground.

Chapter 4

¹ And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach."

Introduction

"The sovereignty of God is not only the power which underwrites the end of history but also the power at work in the detailed ordering of earthly affairs in accordance with his immutable principles of righteousness. Here, when leaders fall and leaders arise, it is he who removes (1) and appoints (4) them. He does so not arbitrarily but through the election processes (6–7) and in accordance with justice (8–17).

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 59

Questions

1. In verses 3:1-6, what three things does Isaiah say will happen to Judah?

"...famine caused by siege (1), the removal of the community's leaders by death or deportation (2-3), and, as a consequence, a complete breakdown of social order (4-5).

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 48

"This creates an impression of the total collapse of the command structure of society. The dissolution of society and the abandonment of true religion is always the signal for superstitions and an obsessive interest in prognostication, hence the reference to the soothsayer or 'fortune-teller'."

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 60

2. There is a significance to the use in the first verse of Supply and Support being taken away.

"Supply and support are masculine and feminine forms of the same noun, an idiom of totality, meaning 'every support without exception'."

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 60

How does this apply to Chapter 3?

3. What event in Judah's history will lead to such a disaster?

"Babylonians who would eventually bring this fully to pass more than a hundred years after Isaiah's death, as described with grim matter-of-factness in 2 Kings 25: 1 - 12." Webb - *The Message of Isaiah*, Barry G. Webb, page 49

2 Kings 25: 1 – 12: ¹ And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it. ² So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. ³ On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. ⁴ Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. ⁵ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him. ⁶ Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him. ⁷ They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon. ⁸ In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month--that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon--Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ And he burned the house of the LORD and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. ¹⁰ And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile. ¹² But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.

4. In verses 3:6-7 what does Isaiah will happen to the leadership of Judah?

The leadership collapses and no one is willing to take over the role of leader.

"They copied the ways of the powerful nations they feared and so ended up being exactly like them. The people, in turn, became like their leaders (5)."

Webb - *The Message of Isaiah*, Barry G. Webb, page 49

"In the political order there is a disinclination to treat leadership seriously and a breakdown in public spirit. Isaiah is not describing events but caricaturing attitudes where leadership merits not thoughtful but hasty action ... Isaiah is in reality describing a breakdown in national character and seriousness; the spirit which treats national welfare, politics and leadership as a joke.

Motyer - *The Prophecy of ISAIAH*, J. Alec Motyer, page 60

What is the root cause of the collapse of Jerusalem and Judah?

“tracing all to a root cause: speech and conduct contrary to the Lord. Isaiah’s own experience taught him the seriousness of sins of speech (6:3) but it is no more than the rest of the Bible affirms (cf. 59:2–3; Pss. 5:9; 10:7; 15:3). With the words defying his glorious presence/‘designed to offer rebellion to the eyes of his glory’, their speech and conduct are described as deliberately provocative.

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 61

5. Is the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC the final fulfillment of the prophecy in verse 8 which concludes “...there deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence?”

No. There is a righteous remnant that will be used to fulfill God’s promise to Israel. Plus, the prophesy is not only to the people of Israel but to us also.

“The righteous as always, are those who are right with God and therefore committed to a life of righteousness. They are not promised immunity from earth’s troubles but that it will be well. Doubtless many of the righteous were among the six out of seven who fell in the predicted war.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 61

“The notion of a righteous remnant which will be preserved to form the nucleus of a new Zion is in fact quite fundamental to Isaiah’s message.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 49

6. Why does Isaiah use children and women to depict incompetent rulers? (v12)

“In other words, the divine ideal of kingship has been corrupted and the holder of the office is inadequate. Women possibly refers to the royal harem. If the king was a spoiled brat then likely enough his wives were numerous and manipulative, fitting what we sense of the reign of Ahaz.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 61

7. What is the indictment that God brings against the leaders of Judah in 3:13-15?

“The charge brought against them both is oppression of the poor. They have used their position to exploit the very ones they should have protected. The language of the indictment is particularly strong (ruined... crushing... grinding), expressing the intensity of the LORD’s revulsion at their actions. For the LORD is on the side of the poor, as the parallel between my people and the poor in verse 15 makes clear.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 50

“The contravention of the law of Leviticus 19:9–10 and Deuteronomy 24:20–21 is precisely the charge the Lord lays against the rulers here. The vineyard is symbolic of the Lord’s care in choosing, delivering and settling his people (Ps. 80:8–11<9–12>);

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 61

Leviticus 19:9–10:⁹ When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest.¹⁰ And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 24:20–21:²⁰ When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.²¹ When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.

Psalms 80:8-12:⁸ You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.⁹ You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land.¹⁰ The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches.¹¹ It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River.¹² Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?

8. By God’s standards as applied in 3:14-15, who are the leaders of God’s people answerable to today?

“It is sobering to reflect that the same high standards of accountability still apply today. Those who lead God’s people are answerable, not just to those they lead,³⁷ but to the LORD who has entrusted his precious people to them, and it is to him that they will finally give account for how they behave.³⁸ We should pray for them daily.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 50.

9. What is God’s judgement against women in 3-16-4:1?

“The essential sin of the men was oppression; that of the women was ostentatious vanity. But clearly the common factor is ill-gotten wealth. The women have been partners in their husbands’ crimes.

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 51

“It is not their luxurious life-style that Isaiah condemns but the arrogant spirit which prompted it. The whole catalogue of judgment (3:16 – 4:1)... The women set out to attract (16) but the act of judgment makes them repellent.

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 63

10. How do the women come out in this judgement? (v25-26)

“these women of Zion will suffer disfiguring disease (17a), sexual abuse (17b),⁴³ captivity (a rope, 24), and bereavement (25). In desperation these proud women will finally be reduced to throwing themselves at any surviving male who will have them.

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 51

What is the meaning of 4:1?

“The men placed reliance on worldly social strength only to find such reliance always perishes for want of people fit to rely on; the women gave their all to allurements only to find that in the end there were no takers. How well Isaiah began this section with the call to refuse to put trust in man (2:22) ! The women providing their own food and clothes (4:1) is the reversal of the due ordering of marriage.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 64