

“Woe to the Women of Zion on Judgement Day”

Isaiah 3:16-26

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

Do you know Christians who appear to live double lives? Those who seem to only be play acting? They know how to speak (language), they are aware of and participate in traditions of the church but steer clear of actual obedience to the will of God. Isaiah knew people who lived double lives – his fellow Israelites. He warned of impending destruction if they continued in their ungodly ways. But Isaiah also understood the two-sided nature of God’s character. There is God’s mercy but there is also God’s judgement, His grace but also His discipline, His justice and forgiveness but also His exile and His salvation. Isaiah challenges his fellow Israelites to commit to faith and life or to suffer the consequences of disobedience which leads to death and destruction.

Up to this point in the prophet Isaiah’s writings, he has spoken primarily of the present sin and judgement to come of the un-ungodly leadership of Jerusalem and Judah that would bring judgement upon all. Historically speaking, during the time of Isaiah’s prophecies, the elders and leaders would all have been male due to the lack of educational opportunities afforded females in that day. However, according to Isaiah, the Lord does not exclude or excuse the sinful actions of the women of that day either. These passages speak primarily of those women that might be considered well-to-do. Its likely they were the wives and daughters of the elders and leaders who had milked the poor and impoverished for all they could.

However, we must warn, the sinful actions mentioned here are not to be construed as being ascribed to women only. For as we uncover the root cause of the judgement of the leaders, we see here that the root causes for the judgement of the women go hand-in-

hand with those of the males. We must all be careful not to fall into these same trappings.

Isaiah 47:3 says: Your nakedness will be exposed and your shame uncovered. I will take vengeance; I will spare no one.”

II. The Lesson: “Woe to the Women of Zion on Judgement Day”

1. vv.16.

The Case Against the Women of Zion.

The case against the women of Zion is not unlike the case against the male elders and leaders. It’s bad enough to say the women were prideful but when we define the word “haughty”, we find that their pride was blatant. The symbolism here (outstretched necks) is of one who looks down on another with contempt, with an attitude of superiority while considering those less fortunate, inferior to themselves. Their stiff-necked arrogance and vanity are on display for all to see. The women of the land became addicted to wealth and fashion. They were more concerned with outer beauty than displaying a heart that pleases God. They had become materialistic in their values. They were more concerned with social status than they were about their “*Spiritual Character*”. They were more concerned with adorning themselves with paint, plaster and pearls to attract men than they were about being found pleasing in the sight of God. Their hearts were calloused and vain. Their motives were not God centered but worldly. We must be careful that our attitudes and motives are Kingdom driven and not driven by the vanity and pride of our society.

2. vv. 17-23.

Judgement for the women of Zion will come in two parts.

First, the Lord will change their appearance by causing them to become bald. This becoming bald is symbolic of being stripped of their alleged countenance. They will be exposed for who they really are. It also implies captivity. These women have this to look forward to should they continue their prideful and vain behaviors. Proverbs 16:5 declares, *“The Lord detests all the proud at heart. Be sure of this: they will not go unpunished”*.

Secondly, the Lord will strip them of their possessions and their prestige. When we look at the items that will be taken away there is within them the mention of crescent necklaces and signet rings. Crescent necklaces were worn in homage to the moon god and signet rings were a symbol of wealth and power. So not only do we see pride, vanity, arrogance and an addiction to wealth, but idolatry also. We must be mindful that those things which are created will never be a sufficient substitute for the Creator. Those material objects can be taken away in a flash and in the grand scheme of things have no value in regards to our salvation. Matthew 6:19-21 reminds us; *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

3. vv. 24.

Isaiah warns that those who have paraded wealth with pride will mourn and suffer the shame (baldness) of losing everything they value. Their beauty and possessions will be replaced with mourning (sackcloth) and marked (branded) to show their unfaithfulness. They will be made captives (rope) and treated like cattle. Proverbs 11:2a lets us know: when pride comes, then comes disgrace.

4. vv. 25-26.

Isaiah warns of a day to come when their artificial glamour will be gone and they will be left mourning the loss of their men and be left sitting in the dust! They will be widowed without a dwelling.

This of itself would be a curse to these proud women. Without a man (husband) in that day would be considered shameful; now these proud women would face lives of disgrace, willing to do anything possible to get a husband.

III. Conclusion:

As Christians today, we must re-examine our own attitudes, motives and lifestyles regularly. We often get caught up in self-centeredness with no thought of the poor and widowed among us. We must be mindful of our actions and our words and be reminded that beauty will fade and possessions will be destroyed but to the one who perseveres there is a crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him. These passages should remind us that our things, our possessions or our outward appearance does not define us or impress God; because unlike humanity He is only impressed by an obedient and humble heart.