

# PM Isaiah 3-4

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if you have your Bibles with you, please turn with me to Isaiah chapter 3, which is in the Pew Bible on page 686. We're going to read two chapters. The first one is slightly longer than the second, but chapter 3 of Isaiah and then into chapter 4.

Isaiah chapter 3. 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.

The mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counsellor and the skilful magician, and the expert in charms.

And I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them. And the people will oppress one another, every one his fellow and every one his neighbour.

The youth will be insolent to the elder and the despised to the honourable. 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.

[ 1 : 39 ] 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.

For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence.

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.

Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him.

My people, infants are their oppressors, and women rule over them. Oh, my people, your guides mislead you, and they have swallowed up the course of your paths.

[ 2 : 55 ] The Lord has taken his place to contend. He stands to judge peoples. 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. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor, declares the Lord God of hosts. 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, therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts.

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

Instead of perfume, there will be rotteness, 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.

[ 5 : 01 ] your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty men in battle, and her gates shall lament and mourn.

Empty, she shall sit on the ground, and seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, we will eat our own bread, and wear out our own clothes, only let us be called by your name, take away our reproach.

In that day, the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.

And he who is left in Zion, and remains in Jerusalem, will be called holy. Everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of

Zion, and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment, and by a spirit of burning.

Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, for over all the glory, there will be a canopy, there will be a booth, for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge, and a shelter, from the storm, and rain.

[ 6 : 52 ] Amen. May God bless this reading of his word to us all. Before we turn to it, we're going to sing once again, this time from Psalm 70, and sing Psalms, which is on page 90, these two.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Isaiah chapters 3 and 4. What we have just read together, is really a description, in chapter 3, of Judah's social condition, and it's not pleasant reading.

Here we are presented with a corrupt society. A corrupt society, which is the result of a corrupt religion.

In chapter 2, the passage that we dealt with, the last time I was here, you have a description, of the corruption, that had entered, into the pure worship of God, among his people, in ancient Judah, and Jerusalem.

And when the worship of God is corrupted, it's really a short step, to the corruption, of society as a whole, both in terms of, social corruption, disintegration, fragmentation, as well as, moral degradation.

[ 8 : 24 ] It reminds me of, the apostle's words in, Romans chapter 1, where he speaks about, the gospel being the power of God, unto salvation. a thing that he was not ashamed of, or of preaching.

And he said, it's because, the righteousness of God, is, or the wrath of God, is being made known, in this world, against all what he calls, the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth, and unrighteousness.

And it's very interesting, to see the order, of those words. He speaks about, ungodliness first, and then he speaks about, unrighteousness of men.

Ungodliness, unrighteousness. When we turn away from God, we turn to, unrighteousness. And we see, man going wrong, with man, because he has first, gone wrong, with God.

And the gospel, puts, man right, first with God, and then, with his, fellow men. Chapter 2, verses 6 to 21, if you flick over the page, speaks about, the corruption, of Judah's, religion.

[ 9 : 49 ] They have, compromised, the faith. They have, brought in, to, the Lord's, revealed, religion, things from the east, or, the practices of the, the Philistines, from the west.

But, the pure worship of God, has been lost, and compromised. And now, in chapter 3, we see, the outworking of that, in society.

So, let's, work our way, through chapter 3, and just, try to, come to terms, with, with, what we are being told here. This is perhaps, a passage, that you haven't read before, or, read often, or recently. So, it's good to, to look at these verses, and try to understand, what the Lord, through his prophet, is saying, in relation, to ancient Judah.

And I think that, as we do that, we will see so many parallels, to the world around us, today. Judah's society, is about, to collapse, and, disintegrate.

[ 11 : 03 ] And this is what we see, in the first, seven verses, of chapter 3. First of all, the Lord, removes, the stable, leadership, of the nation, at both, the national level, and, the local level.

That's what we're told, in the first three verses. For behold, the Lord, God of hosts, and by the way, that is, a, a term, or name, of God, that speaks, of his, sovereignty, over, all things.

Including, societies, including, rulers, including, the economy. It, includes, everything. The Lord, God, of hosts, the sovereign Lord, is taking away, from Jerusalem, and from Judah, support, and supply, all support, of bread, and all support, of water.

But not only, is economic deprivation, going to come, to the nation, but he's going, to take away, the mighty man, and the soldier, the judge, and the prophet, the diviner, and the elder, the captain, of fifty, and the man, of rank, the counselor, and the skillful magician, and the expert, in charms.

So the Lord, notice, is at work here, in this judgment. He is taking, away, the staff of life, and he's taking away, those, who are, the natural born, leaders, of the society.

[ 12 : 46 ] And then secondly, the Lord, sets over his people, what we might call, childish, unqualified, leaders, in the place, of those he has taken away.

So not only, does the Lord take away, but the Lord, makes, verse four, I will make, boys, their princes, and infants, shall rule, over them.

This, does not, bode well, for the smooth, running, of society. And then thirdly, the consequence, of this, will be dreadful.

It will result, in the breaking up, of society, as, we know it. Look at verse, five, 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.

[ 13 : 56 ] What a picture, that is. And it's not, a million miles, from where we are, as a society, today. But that, isn't all, there is, to say here.

In verses six, and seven, the whole notion, of leadership, is corrupted, and, debased. For a man, will take hold, of his brother, in the house, of his father, saying, you have a cloak.

You have a cloak. You shall be, our leader. Outward show, is what counts, in the minds, of these people.

Here's a man, he's got a, a cloak. It's, maybe an impressive garment. And that's what the eye, is attracted to.

But there's no indication, that, like what the Lord, said to Samuel, when he was, anointing, David. The Lord, looks not on the outward, appearance, but on the heart.

[ 15 : 12 ] There's no, assessment, of the character. It's the cloak, it's the outward, show, that is important. You have a cloak, you shall be our leader.

It seems to be, that, frivolous, that, light. The leaders are chosen, for the wrong, reasons. You, you have a cloak, you shall be our leader.

And this heap of ruins, this is what Jerusalem, has come to. This heap of ruins, shall be under your rule. But in that day, the man, who is so, approached, will turn around, and say, I will not be a healer.

I'm not going to be someone, who is going to have to, bandage up, the brokenness, that is in our society. I don't want to take, I don't want to take, that responsibility. I've got no interest, in serving, in this way.

And he denies, that in his house, there is, bread, nor a cloak. And he refuses, to be made, a leader, of the people.

[ 16 : 32 ] And you can see how, the leadership, of the nation, is being, corrupted, in this way.

So, here we see, in the opening part, of chapter 3, the, disintegration, that has, come, and is coming, upon, the nation, that is turned, away, from God.

And what is the root cause, of the collapse, of Judah's, society? Well, this is where we, go further, into the chapter, from, in verses 8, and the first part, of verse 9.

For, Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah, has fallen. Why has Jerusalem, stumbled? Why has Judah, fallen? The picture is, of a man, who, falls, and is mortally, wounded, because of the fall. He is, incapacitated, he's, going to die. He cannot, recover himself. This is the picture, that is being painted, by Isaiah, of the nation, here.

[ 17 : 46 ] Jerusalem, has stumbled, Judah, has fallen, but why? What is the root cause, of this stumble, and fall? And he says, it's because, their speech, and their deeds, are against the Lord, defying, his glorious, presence.

Speech, and deeds, against the Lord. Defying, his glorious presence, literally, the eyes, of his glory. And this is Isaiah, the prophet, the preacher, putting his finger, on the root cause, of the trouble, that is coming, upon, his nation, and people.

they are defiant, in the eyes, of God, in the very presence, of God, before the face, of God, they are rebellious, and defiant.

their speech, their deeds, their pride, they know, no shame, they don't feel shame, anymore, on account, of their sin.

[ 19 : 01 ] They sin, in God's, very presence, and they, do not, even, blush. No attempt, to cover, or to hide, their sin. Look at verse 9.

For the look, on their faces, bears witness, against them. They proclaim, their sin, like Sodom. They do not, hide it.

Open, state, of rebellion, against the Lord, God Almighty. And so, this paves the way, now, for, God's, retribution.

God's, retributive justice. Look at the second part, of verse 9. Woe to them, for they have brought, evil, on themselves.

And that evil, speaks about, the disaster, the calamity, that is coming, upon, Judah, and Jerusalem. Tell the righteous, that it shall be, well with them, for they shall eat, the fruit, of their deeds.

[ 20 : 16 ] The righteous, are those, who believe, God's word, who trust, his promises, and who seek, to commit, their lives, to God's ways. They are the righteous, who look, to the Lord.

It will be, well with them, the prophet declares, for they shall eat, the fruit, of their deeds. What a man sows, that shall he also reap. But that principle, of retributive justice, applies, not only to the righteous, but also, to the wicked.

As we see there, in verse 9, and verse 11, woe to them, for they have brought evil, on themselves. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for what his hands, have dealt out, shall be done, to him. It's like an echo, of the book of Proverbs, isn't it?

That the Israelites, were reared, on, this was their instruction, from childhood. And they knew, that, the fear of the Lord, was the beginning, of wisdom.

[ 21 : 29 ] Fearing the Lord, would bring, blessing, and prosperity. They, were taught, the law, which, showed, that for obedience, the Lord, would bless, his people, in keeping, with the terms, of the covenant, that he had made.

But if they, departed from him, if they, disobeyed his commandments, if they, followed other gods, if they, imported the religious, thoughts, and practices, of the surrounding nations, if they became, like those nations, then God, would be displeased, with them.

And they, in effect, would bring, judgment, calamity, disaster, evil, upon themselves. And then, we see, God's judgment, applied, in more, particular, ways.

The Lord, rises, as a judge, judge. It's as if, his courtroom, is being, set out, and he, is taking, his seat, as a judge.

And you can see that, can't you, in, verses 13, and 14. The Lord, has taken his place, to contend.

[ 23 : 00 ] He stands, to judge peoples. the Lord, the Lord, will enter, into judgment, with the elders, and princes, of his people. It is time, for judgment.

But the Lord's judgment, is just. It is in accordance, as it always is, with strict justice. And so, he sets his court.

He, rises, to judge, the people. He, has, an indictment, against, those, who, have, oppressed, his people.

Verse 12, my people, infants, are their oppressors, and women, rule over them. Oh, my people, your guides, mislead you, and they have, swallowed up, the course, of your paths.

Those, paths, and ways, that the nations, in chapter 2, came, to, Mount Zion, to learn, have been, destroyed.

[ 24 : 09 ] They've been, swallowed up. They've been, airbrushed, out of the life, of the Jewish, people. They've been, forgotten. And instead, they're being, oppressed, and misled, by their rulers.

And the Lord, is now, summoning, these rulers, to appear, before his, judgment seat, to give, an account, of their actions. So he, enters into judgment, with the elders, and princes of his people.

Verse 14, and he says to them, it is you, who have devoured, the vineyard. The spoil of the poor, is in your houses. What do you mean, by crushing my people, by grinding, the face of the poor, declares, the Lord, God, of hosts.

God is concerned, for his people's welfare. And he, is not going to sit by, and watch, those, with the power, and the resources, who have oppressed, and devoured, and stolen from, and crushed, and grind, grind, ground, the face of his people, in the dirt.

He summons them, to his, judgment seat. And then, the attention, turns, from those princes, and rulers, and elders, to these, daughters of Zion, that we read about, in these words, in verse 16.

[ 25 : 42 ] And what a picture, this is, of the pride, and haughtiness, and wantonness, and, worldliness, of, the children, of Zion.

Zion is the mother, these are the children, of, Zion. And like the mother, so, the daughters. Because the daughters, of Zion, are haughty, pride, and walk, with outstretched necks, ostentatious, glancing wantonly, with their eyes, flirtatious, mincing along, as they go, tinkling, with their feet, so weighed down, by ornaments, around their ankles, and feet, that they find it, difficult to walk, and have to take, these little, mincing steps.

The whole attitude, is one, that has turned, its back, upon the Lord, and is turned, instead, to the things, of this world, to fill, one's own, heart, and soul.

Things, that can never, truly satisfy. And as a result, the Lord says, that he will strike, with the scab, the heads, of the daughters, of Zion, and the Lord, will lay bare, their secret parts. And this, is an indication, of what is going, to happen, when Jerusalem, and Judah, falls to the enemy.

[ 27 : 19 ] And these, beautiful daughters, of Zion, dressed, so, extravagantly, will be reduced, as we'll see, in a moment, to, people, ready, for the slave market, and, captivity, in exile.

In that day, the Lord, will take away, the finery, of the anklets, and the headbands, and the crescents. By the way, this is probably, one of the few passages, in ancient literature, that mentions, so many, things, that were, prized, by, societies, in those days.

Some of these things, we're not quite sure, what exactly, they refer to, but you get, the overall picture. God is going, to take away, the finery, of the anklets, the headbands, the crescents, the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarves, the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets, the signet ring, and the nose rings, the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags, the mirrors, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.

He's going to take them all away. Why did they live, for these things, and not for the Lord?

And instead of perfume, there will be, rotteness. And instead of a belt, a rope. Instead of a rich robe, a skirt of sackcloth, and branding.

[ 29 : 09 ] Instead of beauty. Do you see the picture here? They're being stripped. They've probably been raped. They've been shaved.

They've been stripped. They've been clothed with sackcloth. And they've been branded with a branding iron. And they've been tied together with a rope.

Ready to be taken into a foreign, far-flung land. To be sold into slavery. And who is there to protect them?

We're told, in the next verse, your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty men in battle. And her gates, this is speaking of Zion, shall lament and mourn, empty.

She shall sit on the ground. It's a picture of great carnage. the city emptied of its pride and joy.

[ 30 : 24 ] Economic dislocation. The gates were the place where business and legal transactions were done. It's a place of lamentation. Place of mourning.

Empty. she shall sit on the ground. And then, the last verse in this picture of the disintegration of Judah and Jerusalem society.

It's so tragic, isn't it? 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. so many men have died. Six out of seven.

Something along those proportional lines. The seven women so desperate for a place of refuge will come to one man.

[ 31 : 28 ] You don't need to provide for us. We'll bring our own food. We'll get our own clothing. only let us be called by your name and take away our reproach.

Give us children that we might not bear the reproach of childlessness. This is the description of the Lord's judgment upon his people.

It's an absolute tragedy. it is a devastating thing to fall under the judgment of this God.

I think it would be appropriate to read together from another part of scripture that is related to what Isaiah has said and it is the account in 2 Kings chapter 25 of Isaiah's prophecy being fulfilled.

world. In 2 Kings chapter 25 we read these words verse 2 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 led siege to it and they built siege works all around it so the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah 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.

[ 33 : 18 ] God said he would take away all support of water and all support of food. 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 and the Chaldeans were around the city and they went in the direction of the Arabah 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 then they captured the king brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah and they passed sentence on him 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

in the fifth month on the seventh day of the month that was the nineteenth year of king

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar the captain of the bodyguard a servant of the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem 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 and all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem 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 Nebuchadnezzar the captain of the guard carried into exile but the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and ploughmen what a fulfillment of

Isaiah's prophecy God speaks in his word and we know that what he says will come to pass and that brings us to the second verse of chapter 4 which begins with the words in that day that's a phrase that is repeated throughout these previous verses and we expect more of the same and yet here is an amazing picture being painted for us not of judgment but of salvation restoration renewal cleansing in that day not a day of judgment but of restoration and renewal and we're introduced to something new here the branch of the

Lord we know from other parts of scripture that the branch of the Lord is a phrase that is used in the prophets to speak of the Messiah who will be born from the line of David and what are we told here this branch of the Lord is beautiful glorious fruitful he is the object of pride and honour in other words here is a message of hope couched in Isaiah's prophetic and poetic language and terms and if you read through these verses let's read them again and pick out some of the themes in that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honour of the survivors of Israel and he who is left in

Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the blood stains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night for over all the glory there will be a canopy there will be a booth for shade by day from the heat and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and the rain here friends is a message of hope here is a message look at verse 2 of glory and survival here is a message look at verse 3 of holiness and in verse 4 a message of cleansing a thorough rinsing a thorough washing the sins that were so stark in the previous chapter are going to be purged clean away here is a message of a new creation and of

[ 39 : 17 ] God dwelling with his people verse 5 life and here is a message about a shelter that is open for people to enter and entering into that shelter they will be protected from all possible dangers and eventualities from the heat and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain the daughter of Zion is mentioned in chapter 3 verse 16 and again is mentioned in this passage chapter 4 verse 4 she's mentioned they're mentioned in terms of condemnation and they're mentioned again in terms of salvation it's a strange passage

I admit but as you read through it and meditate upon it you can see the disintegration that sin brings how God's judgment works itself out in the life of a nation and you see the futility and hopelessness the foolishness as verse chapter 2 ends stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath for of what account is he man is this derived being he holds everything he has as a gift from the Lord he's not to be trusted in he is not able to save we ought to put our hope and trust in the Lord himself regard the Lord trust in the Lord not in man and his ingenuity what are the lessons we can learn from this passage as we take a step back and try to process what we've heard this evening well the first lesson is this we belong to a rebellious and sinful race our speech and our deeds are against the Lord we defy him by our sin we sin in his very presence we are deserving of his wrath and judgment second lesson we can learn from this passage is that our ways the way we live our sinful ways are the cause of our troubles we reap what we sow we sow to the wind from the wind we will reap destruction third thing we can learn is that God is sovereign and this is a passage that reminds us of that from beginning to end God is sovereign and he rules in history God is over all the affairs of men he brings men down he brings governments down he brings rulers down he puts rulers in place he's in control of supply chains and economies he is the one who would bring an end to all support of bread and all support of water he is the one who ordains which armies are going to be victorious in battle the Lord is sovereign he is the

Lord God of hosts and as I say the other lesson we can learn from this passage is the foolishness and futility of trusting man who cannot save others or save himself he is the one whose in whose nostrils is breath that doesn't speak about man's transitoryness though man is transitory he's here today he's gone tomorrow he's like the flower of the grass the wind blows over it is gone its place remembers it no more but what this verse is really teaching us is that the breath in his nostrils is the gift of God his life is in

God's hands he is a frail creature of the dust and he is not to be regarded in the same way as our creator and God is to be regarded we are not to trust in man or in princes or in governments we are to trust in the Lord God and the last thing I think we should learn from this passage and with this I end the God who judges in wrath this passage teaches is also the God who saves and renews and restores in grace he has in his grace and mercy provided a way of salvation this branch of the Lord that shall be beautiful and glorious this this refuge at the end of chapter 4 there will be a booth for shade by day from the heat and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain it's a wonderful picture reminding the children of Israel of their days as those who were redeemed from Egypt and who were brought through the wilderness and who lived in booths with the pillar of cloud by day the pillar of fire by night to guard them to guide them all of these references here remind the readers of Isaiah or those who heard him preach of God's saving work in former generations but here he is speaking words of grace to a nation and a city that had rebelled against the Lord judgment was coming but in the judgment there is a way of salvation he has provided a place of refuge and it's open for you to enter in in order to be safe from the heat of the day and from the storm and the rain that's why I've chosen as our closing hymn the words of Charles

[ 46 : 50 ] Wesley's great gospel hymn which speaks about Jesus Christ as a refuge Jesus lover of my soul let me to thy bosom fly while the nearer waters roll while the tempest still is high and say people are going ahead to you to who said where he