

Jerusalem Then ... Jerusalem Now
Isaiah 3-4
Lesson 2
September 27, 2012

→ Memory verse: Isaiah 3:10- "Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds."

Isaiah 4:2- "In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel."

→ *Intro & prayer ... Journey of preparation*

Lecture:

Tell the righteous it will be well for them. That is you, ya know ... the righteous. For you there is hope. Isaiah has come with a message of judgment and hope from the Lord.

The past several years I have found our studies to be personally reassuring and comforting, a guide through my own problems and worries, and a beacon of hope. Over the past few summers I have made it a habit to read our next book of the Bible to study as an overview. I think I enjoyed the stories of Genesis the most. Surprisingly, this summer I found relevance and reassurance in the warnings and promises of Isaiah.

The Bible is filled with repeated themes of obedience and rebellion. We see the rebellion in Eden with Adam and Eve. There is the lesson of faithfulness and obedience with Abraham and Isaac. Then we see the sin and rebellion of the sons of Israel as their self-pride moves them to sell their own brother Joseph into slavery; but how hopeful was the obedience of Joseph to become the symbolic savior of his people.

→ This summer I did some background reading and I thought you might like to see where I studied from.

I also want to offer a disclaimer. Tonight I have three contemporary examples to share with you. They are situations that impact my world. Just as the prophets spoke to the people within the context of their day, I hope that you can see what I see within the context of

Resources:

- Life Application Bible & Study Bible, NIV
- New Living Translation Bible
- Easton's Bible Dictionary
- Ashbury Bible Commentary
- Holman Old Testament Commentary
- Raymond C Ortlund, "Isaiah, God Saves Sinners"
- Bible Gateway (online)
- Personal life

my world. These are my perspectives alone and not necessarily the views of Eastside or People of the Word.

I envision that Isaiah as a young man viewed the people of Israel; God's chosen people, with a feeling of sadness and frustration. If they would only listen to God and turn from their worldly ways, God would have so many blessings for them. Isaiah had a vision of what God's people would face if they continued on their chosen path. They wanted to make their own choices. They didn't want to do things God's way. If only they could see what Isaiah saw, they might make different choices.

From our opening lecture and Lesson 1, Carol shared the background and role of Isaiah as a prophet. Prophets were God's messengers to the people, and they spoke within the context of their day.

→ In Isaiah's day Jerusalem was a city of conflict and contrasts. Consider Isaiah himself. His name means "the salvation of Jehovah" or "the Lord saves". He was the son of Amoz. Carol described Isaiah as coming from an aristocratic family, in the company of kings. The commentaries I read described Isaiah's father Amoz as a man of humble position, so Isaiah perhaps came from humble beginnings and later lived in an aristocratic family.

Isaiah served as prophet to the people for about 64 years, spanning the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Bible commentaries state that our lesson of chapters 3 & 4 likely occurred during the reign of King Uzziah.

Uzziah was the king of Judah for 52 years and Isaiah came into position as a young man toward the end of his reign. Isaiah must have been influenced by the events of that time. King Uzziah's reign was considered the second most profitable to Judah since the time of Solomon. Uzziah was considered a vigorous and able ruler. During the early years of his reign he was faithful and pleasing to Jehovah God. Unfortunately, his later years were destructive to God's ways. From my readings, I suspect that pride overcame him and he may have felt over confident in his role as ruler.

King Uzziah's sin was that he invaded the temple priest's quarters and offered incense on the golden altar. He was confronted by the High Priest Azariah and a band of 80 priests to cease his arrogant acts against God. Uzziah was suddenly struck with leprosy while in the act of offering incense and driven from the temple. He died in a house outside the palace and was buried in a grave separate from the other kings of Judah.

The lesson here was that God would not tolerate interference with the unfolding of his purposes. This was the environment and influence of the early years of Isaiah as he was called to the position of prophet.

→ In those days Judah was under rule and control of the Assyrians. The Assyrians were Semites and a military people. They were considered the “Romans of the East”. The Assyrian style of conquest and dominance was to repopulate the land with foreigners brought in to replace those who were carried off or deported. Only the lower class Israelites remained as laborers in Jerusalem. Israelites more educated or skilled were carried away to serve the conquering rulers and military leaders.

With the population shift of Jerusalem came transplanted foreigners with foreign gods leading to religious pollution to this portion of the Promised Land. The result was an unacceptable ethnic and religious amalgamation of God’s chosen people.

Imagine, if you will, the prophet Isaiah walking through the gates of Jerusalem and seeing his people living a life co-mingled with foreigners worshipping pagan gods of all kinds. He must have wondered

Is this really Jerusalem? We might as well be in Sodom? (A comparison referenced in Isaiah 3:9)

Isaiah warned the people about the dangers of their new lifestyle. There was grave danger to them as God’s chosen people should they be enticed to assimilate to the lifestyle and practices of the foreigners and their pagan gods.



*See now the Lord, the Lord Almighty,
Is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah
Both supply and support:
All supplies of food and all supplies of water,
The hero and the warrior, the judge and the prophet,
The diviner and the elder, the captain of fifty and the man of rank,
The counselor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter. (Is 3:1-3)*

→ Perhaps Isaiah saw a woman like this as he walked through the streets of Jerusalem and wondered if this was God’s holy city or Sodom?

This summer I saw contemporary signs of a type of foreign invasion in



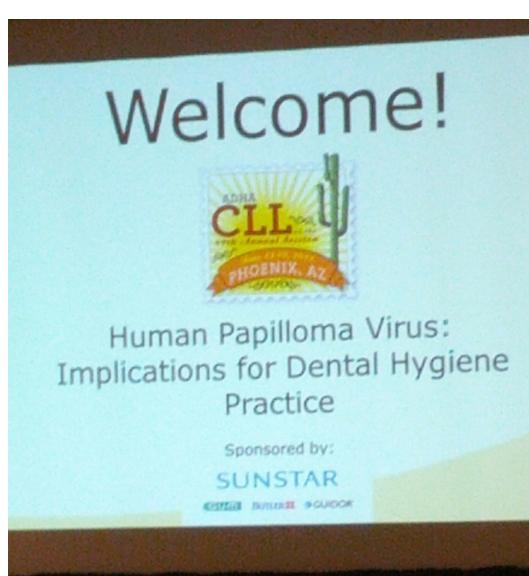
our world today. Maybe you can see what I see.

This is an attractive woman, wouldn't you say? This is an actual person in our world today. Her name is Elaine Davidson. According to the Guiness World Records she is the "Most Pierced Woman". Elaine was born in Brazil and now lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, and she is a former nurse. Elaine reportedly has nearly 7,000 body piercings, with 192 of them in her face alone. When asked why she acquired all those body piercings, she replied that she wanted the recognition as the world's most pierced woman. She was proud of her award.

I found pictures, videos and the description of Elaine easily on the Internet. In the video clips, I could see some pretty nice dental work in her mouth when she talked. Other than those piercings, she appears to have a healthy smile. My thoughts about Elaine are related to my professional role as a dental hygienist. Somewhere in Scotland there is a dentist and hygienist who are cleaning and taking dental x-rays of this lady's teeth. To take dental x-rays, every one of those 192 facial piercings need to be removed. Honestly, I am relieved that Elaine is not my patient!

However, in case you assume folks like Elaine are not in our corner of the world, think again. Today healthcare professionals are being educated to care for patients with body art and body modifications. And lest you believe this has no impact on us, consider that the fastest growing demographic group to have body art of piercings and tattoos are baby boomers! Have you counted the number of tattoo parlors in downtown Fullerton?

And what is the danger of having piercings and tattoos in body art parlors and such? It is the risk of inadequate infection control and the risk of a disease called Hepatitis C, which is considered the leading cause of liver transplants today!



Like Isaiah, and as one who provides dental healthcare, I ask you, "Are we living in Jerusalem, or this might as well be Sodom?"

➔ This is the title slide of a continuing education course I took this summer. The speaker was a dental hygienist doing research in bacteriology. What does Human Papilloma Virus have to do with dental hygienists? Well, during that dental cleaning appointment, we do an oral cancer screening, checking the tissues of your mouth for any abnormalities. The incidence of oral cancer

with HPV is currently low, but when it occurs and oral cancer is detected, it is usually in advanced stages and often fatal. Who is at risk of HPV? The CDC is reporting girls and boys as young as 12 years old are at risk.

Until recently I checked for oral cancer on all my adult patients and mostly as a tobacco risk. Now I'm checking all my patients, even children. Why; because our adolescents and teens are at risk for HPV because of common sexual practices today. During this course I thought, "Amazing! What about some simple Biblical morality! That would reduce the disease risk."

Are we living in Jerusalem? Or this might as well be Sodom and Gomorrah!

How many of you cast your dollars this summer in support or opposition of Chick Fil A and the statement about the biblical definition of marriage by the company owner? Wasn't that a lightening rod issue? Where are we living?

Related to the Chick Fil A statement and controversy, I read an article in the editorial section of the OC Register of August 6 by Star Parker, a black, Christian, political columnist. She was explaining how a coalition of African-American pastors were withdrawing their affiliation from the Democratic National Party due to the party's position on gay marriage. She said:

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"These black pastors (the Coalition of African-American Pastors, a group of 3,700 plus black pastors under the leadership of the Rev. William Owens), ... Understand that a society that validates alternative lifestyles that undermine life-sustaining biblical truths is a society that will inevitably promote and advance sins deadly behavior."

I hope there is no doubt in your minds that we are living in a world similar to Isaiah when he walked through Jerusalem in about 740 BC, during the reign of King Uzziah. As a society, we are suffering from the leprosy of Uzziah. Our "kings" may have different names and titles, but the problems of the people are the same. Isaiah boldly warned the people and the kings against God's judgment for their sins and urged them to repent.

→ Sophecles said,

"The keenest sorrow is to recognize ourselves as the sole cause of our adversities."

Isaiah was warning the people about the dangers of foreign invasion and that it was brought on by their own choices. Assyria had already conquered Judah and their dominance was becoming evident. Have you ever experienced foreign invasion? No? Well, I bet you have and you just don't realize. How about the invasion of greed, self-pride, adultery, and addictions of all kinds? Those can be considered foreign invasions today.

One foreign invasion I have experienced was the divorce of my parents as a pre-teen and the sins that lead to the dissolution of our family unit. It's been nearly 50 years and it remains an active impact in the lives of me and my family today. It was the invasion of rebellion, plain and simple, and it affects us every day, even now.

➔ What happens when we rebel? What happens when we choose against obedience? What happens when God allows our sin to follow its logical conclusion? Isaiah tells us that four things occur.

1. A loss of stability and a loss of leadership
2. Corrupt ways gain power at the expense of the poor and helpless
3. Self pride leads to a loss of all that is believed important
4. God's judgment

➔ Ray Ortlund in his book "Isaiah, God Saves Sinners" quotes Jim Elliott.

"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain this, which he can never lose." (Jim Elliot) Ortlund elaborates, "We will not gain what we cannot lose without giving up what we cannot keep. Loss for the sake of gain, this is the way of God for us."

Let's look closer at the 4 stages of rebellion as prophesied by Isaiah. The good news is that God gives hope to the remnant that is left behind.

A. A Loss of Stability and a lack of leadership (3:1-12)

➔ So brazen and proud were God's children in Jerusalem that they flaunted their sin openly. Sodom was the only comparison. God entered into mourning for his people. As a result, he took away everything that stabilized the corporate life of Isaiah's generation: all support of bread, and all support of water. What was Isaiah warning the people about, Assyrian invasion with all its destabilizing impact.

God also took away Jerusalem's leaders and replaced them with irresponsible boys so that social cohesion dissolved into chaos. In desperation, the people looked for

someone, anyone, to provide guidance and courage in their place. But no one was willing.

One of the consequences of failing to worship God wholeheartedly is a leadership vacuum. The warning for every generation is this. One way God judges his people is by depriving them of worthy leaders. Isaiah foresaw this loss for his generation – the loss of stability as real leaders disappear and the people stumble into confusion. But this loss God remedies with a great gain. His plan is to send the Messiah.

Another way God can judge his people is to replace their absurd arrogance with everything they dread.

B. The wealthy gain power at the expense of the poor (3:13-15)

→ In Isaiah's day the elders used their legal and political powers to feather their own nests. This, among other things, brought God's judgment on Israel. These leaders were royal officials who traced their positions of power back to Moses. They were military officials. They had power to imprison people. Gradually the term "elders" came to be generalized to include all royal officials. At times they represented a threat to the king. They also represented a threat to the poor country farmers by using their political power to demand payments and gifts.

*The LORD enters into judgment
against the elders and leaders of his people:
"It is you who have ruined my vineyard;
the plunder from the poor is in your houses.(3:14)*

V. 14 - The prophet placed his audience under arrest and dragged them into God's courtroom for judgment and sentencing. People who parade their sin, bow to the products of their own hands, and lift their faces in arrogant pride will soon march away to a foreign land. Present prosperity would soon disappear, because it was based on a lifestyle of pride and idolatry. God would remove all Jerusalem's resources in judgment.

C. The deception of self-pride (3:16-4:1)

→ God even convicted the ladies, for them he would remove all their feminine finery, not because it was evil in itself, but because it was contributing to their false pride. New clothing would be laid out. These clothes would be suitable for pilgrimage into exile rather than pilgrimage to the temple. Such a pilgrimage would be lonely, because their men would die in battle and few, if any, would remain in Jerusalem.

The women would lose all their pride as they fought over whatever sort of man happened to remain alive. The women would want no material goods from men, only a married name and children to remove the disgrace of being unmarried and barren.

How the daughters of Zion felt the evil of pride. But pride is what made an angel into a devil. (1 Tim 3:6) Pride is the complete anti-God state of mind.

*Instead of fragrance there will be a stench;
instead of a sash,) a rope;
instead of well-dressed hair, baldness;
instead of fine clothing, sackcloth;
instead of beauty,) branding.(3:24)*

Verse 24 is the heart of this section, 5 times we see the phrase “instead of”. God is describing capture and exile and abuse.

When the people’s pride forced him into it, God exchanged pretense with reality, and life trailed off into unspeakable sadness as “wealthy women, secure in their luxury and their allure, are reduced to hags with scabs, begging to belong to someone.” How desolate they were.

The secret beauty of a Christian woman is a persona radiant with the Holy Spirit. The world does not have a category for that kind of beauty. A God-filled woman is beautiful, whatever her age or features. She is dressed properly for The Occasion – that coming day when the Lord alone will be exalted.

➔ The desperation of these tragic women in 4:1 stands parallel with the desperate men of 3:6. A man takes hold of his brother in a pitiful attempt to escape social chaos, and women take hold of a man in a pitiful attempt to escape personal shame. Both images merge in 3:25-26 where Isaiah describes a metaphorical lady, Jerusalem herself. God has taken away her “support and supply”, with all her finery, and “empty, she shall sit on the ground.” What losses must we suffer, so that we prize Christ as our only true gain? What price must we pay for our rebellion?

3:6 – In those days a man will say to his brother, “Since you have a coat, you be our leader! Take charge of this heap of ruins!”

4:1 – In that day so few men will be left that seven women will fight for each man, saying, “Let us all marry you! We will provide our own food and clothing. Only let us take your name so we won’t be mocked as old maids.”

3:25-26 – The men of the city will be killed with the sword, and her warriors will die in battle. The gates of Zion will weep and mourn. The city will be like a ravaged woman, huddled on the ground.

D. Protection for the faithful (4:2-6)

→ However, there is hope for holiness because after judgment comes redemption. Salvation comes only after judgment and God himself must perform the cleansing. This can be done only through acts of judgment.

God must bring the arrogance and pride of his people low before he can give them his promised day of hope. He must bring mourning before he can bring the new morning of hope. This is because pride pokes its ugly face into each of our lives.



4:2 – But on that day, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of all who survive in Israel.

The question is, will we make it as survivors? Will we be a part of the remnant? A survivor is one who escapes the death sword in war, or the messenger who escapes battle with the message of horrendous defeat. God is the one who enables people to escape. Those who are left in Zion represent God's remnant.

God's anger at the people's disobedience causes him to come in judgment. That judgment may leave a small helpless remnant, no remnant or a remnant which God uses to complete the work of his plan of salvation for the world. God used a remnant of his people many times.

- The 1st remnant came with Noah and the flood.
- God sent Joseph to preserve a remnant in Egypt.
- God seeks a faithful remnant of those who are true to him.
- Leaving a remnant is God's decision and may not happen at all.

The center of Isaiah's remnant thinking is reflected in his son Shear-Jashub, which means "a remnant will return". 4:2 – "The branch of the Lord," with the parallel "the fruit of the land," is a metaphor for the Messiah. Jesus the Christ replaces false beauty with true desirability.



The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. (4:4)

On the day of the Lord, the Spirit will wash the church clean with judgment and burning (4:4). That is significant. It means we do not find hope in avoiding judgment, rather in going through judgment. Without judgment, we remain as we are.



It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. (4:6)

On this final Day of the Lord, the glory will not just fill a tabernacle or a temple; it will cover “the whole site of Mount Zion” and “her assemblies”. The display of his glory will not be intimidating, as it was on Mount Sinai. We will feel, and we will be, sheltered in his presence forever (4:6). And everything will finally be perfect.

➔ “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain this, which he can never lose.”

Last year we studied the writings of John. Personally I gained a greater awareness of the power and significance of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, living within me. In my preparation and studies for this lesson I came across an excerpt from C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, with a touch of English style.

C.S. Lewis - *Imagine yourself living in a house. God comes to build that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what he is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof. You knew those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But soon he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - adding a wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; instead he is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself.*

➔ (palace)