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Sermon Notes

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## **Clearing the Site: From Vainglory to True Glory**

### **Isaiah 3-4**

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, a huge pile of debris was left on Ground Zero; twisted steel girders, rubble, and other wreckage continued to smolder for five months after the attack... it was dubbed "The Pile" by workers.

On May 30, 2002, there was a significant ceremony: the last piece of steel from the World Trade center was removed from the site, draped in an American flag. The "last-piece" of steel has been recycled as the bow of the new San Antonio-class amphibious assault ship USS *New York*. The term "Pile" was no longer used after this

The clearing of the Ground Zero site was essential in order to go ahead with the plans for building the proposed Freedom Tower in its place... without the clearing of the pile of debris, the Freedom Tower, 1776 feet high, could never be built

- a. Biblically: The building site is the hearts of His people, along with Jerusalem itself
- b. The building is the New Jerusalem: a combination of spiritual dwelling place and literal city
- c. The rubble is the residual of human arrogance and sin which must be cleared or the eternal structure cannot be built

So in our passage in Isaiah 3-4, we see the destruction of Jerusalem for sin... but so the New Jerusalem can be built

It's a passage that speaks a word of warning to our own nation, a word of repentance and prayer... not presumption... to American Christians

## **II. Bookends of Grace Surround Severe Judgment**

### **A. The Mountain of the Lord (Isa. 2) and the Branch of the Lord (Isa. 4)**

1. Two of the sweetest and clearest prophecies of the future glory of Christ's kingdom
2. Bookend #1: Isaiah 2: the Mountain of the Lord's Temple and the streaming of the nations

3. Bookend #2: Isaiah 4: the Branch of the Lord fruitful, Mount Zion cleansed and protected by a canopy of glory

BUT: in between the glorious bookends, descriptions of terrible judgment on Judah and Jerusalem

#### B. Great Judgment Clears the Building Site (Isaiah 2-3)

1. Isaiah 2: all lofty arrogant human structures removed and the Lord alone to be exalted

***Isaiah 2:17 The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day***

2. Isaiah 3: The Lord “takes away” and the Lord “takes away”

***Isaiah 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***

***Isaiah 3:18-20 In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, <sup>19</sup> the earrings and bracelets and veils, <sup>20</sup> the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms***

3. As though the building site is being cleared for a spectacular new building
4. C.S. Lewis Quote

“Imagine yourself living in a house. God comes in to rebuild 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, and so on; you knew these jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to 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—throwing out a new 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; but he is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p.160

This is what God is doing in Isaiah 3-4

### III. Loss of Stability (3:1-15)

***Isaiah 3:1-3 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, <sup>2</sup> the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and elder, <sup>3</sup> the captain of fifty and man of rank, the counselor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter.***

#### A. The “Pillars of Society” Are Gifts of God

1. Pillars: sources of support, holding up everyday life... the daily existence, by which we make it through life in this world
  - a. Blind Samson put his hand on the twin pillars of the temple of Dagon... when he pushed them over, the entire structure collapsed and thousands died
  - b. Last year a bridge in Minneapolis collapsed because time and rust had made the structural supports inadequate... the bridge collapsed, throwing people to their deaths in the river

Isaiah 3: God is threatening the removal of all the structural supports of Jerusalem and Judah: a stable food supply

2. Simple removal: all supplies of food and all supplies of water... through the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions
3. "Pillars" = supply and support... beyond food and water
  - a. Good leaders: a godly king who rules with justice provides incredible blessings for his nation

Isaiah 3 depicts the total vacuum of leadership... the scourge of anarchy and instability

***Proverbs 28:2 When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers, but a man of understanding and knowledge maintains order.***

- b. Military heroes: "the hero and warrior"... the man who rallies the troops and makes the heroic stand against the enemy
  - i) The Judges: like Jephthah, Gideon, Shamgar who all delivered the Israelites from their Gentile enemies by great courage and military strength
  - ii) In this final assault of Assyria, there would be no hero or warrior... everyone will be terrified, all courage and strength stripped of the men

A nation depends in times of great trial on heroes who step forward and lead:

Illus. General Washington, winter of 1776

Six months after the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution was all but lost. A powerful British force had routed the Americans at New York, occupied three colonies, and advanced within sight of Philadelphia. George Washington had lost 90% of his army and was driven across the Delaware River. Panic and despair was spreading through the states. But George Washington, and many other patriots, refused to let the American Revolution die. Washington knew that an army fights on its morale even more than on its full stomach... soldiers will bear almost any suffering and privation if they are convinced they will win; so on Christmas night, as a howling nor-easter struck the Delaware Valley, he

led his men daringly across the Delaware River, defeated a force of Hessians at Trenton, capturing nearly a thousand men. The result was astonishing... the morale in the army and throughout the states soared, and the fortunes of the Revolution were permanently altered

Washington was a hero, a warrior, a pillar without which this nation would not have been born

In our day, the soldiers who are risking their lives for the stability of Iraq are modern-day heroes... we have one in our midst every week, Scotty Smiley, who lost his eyesight on April 6, 2005 when facing a suicide car-bomber in Mosul. Scotty's strong faith in Christ has allowed him to continue to pursue lofty goals in life. He's here at Duke in Business School and is an incredible role model of cheerfulness, perseverance and faith to everyone who knows him. In my mind, he's a hero—not to puff him up.

Woe to the nation that runs out of heroes and warriors at the time of crisis

Other pillars of society:

- c. Skilled laborers: “skilled craftsman”, “clever enchanters”
- d. Wise counselors: with wise counselors a King makes wise policies

## B. God Removes These Pillars

1. These human pillars, these human supports are to be removed
2. Why?
  - a. An act of judgment, bringing the sins of Judah and Jerusalem down on their heads
  - b. An act of vindicating of God's holiness, upholding His law and His reputation among the nations
  - c. An act of mercy... clearing the way in the hearts of His people for the future building of the New Jerusalem

## C. Anarchy

1. Leaders removed, the nation staggers, stumbles and falls
2. God's ordinary patterns of leadership: qualified men
  - a. God raises up mature men... seasons them, trains them, prepares them to bear the burden of leadership
  - b. Yes, men... from the first moment God created Adam from the dust of the earth and he was alone, God established men as leaders... not just head of the home, but leaders in society... Adam was head of his family and of the human race

- c. But in Judah and Jerusalem, the men are dead or removed... all that are left are women and children... and unqualified men

Young children become rulers...

***Isaiah 3:4 I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them.***

Whatever men are left squabble over leadership on ridiculous terms:

***Isaiah 3:6-7 A man will seize one of his brothers at his father's home, and say, "You have a cloak, you be our leader; take charge of this heap of ruins!"<sup>7</sup> But in that day he will cry out, "I have no remedy. I have no food or clothing in my house; do not make me the leader of the people."***

The total absence of qualified male leadership results in women and children ruling:

***Isaiah 3:12 Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. O my people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path.***

- d. God has ordained men to lead... a society like this, so totally broken down, results in female leadership of the whole country

Isaiah 3:12 is a fascinating verse for a nation like ours, which may be on the verge of electing its first woman President

We feel we have come so far, an enlightened, liberated people, freed from the shackles of traditionalism

We are PROUD that we have come so far

BUT does the Scripture support such a world view? Is the leadership of women over a country seen to be a blessing of God in Isaiah 3:12? I think it is clearly a depiction of how far His people had fallen

3. The result is anarchy... an almost total loss of societal structure... when might makes right

***Isaiah 3:5 People will oppress each other-- man against man, neighbor against neighbor. The young will rise up against the old, the base against the honorable***

D. The Root Cause

***Isaiah 3:8-11 Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence.<sup>9</sup> The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.<sup>10</sup> Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.<sup>11</sup> Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done.***

## 1. General wickedness

- a. Isaiah already likened the people of God to Sodom and Gomorrah
- b. Here they “parade their sin like Sodom”... PROUD OF SIN!!!

Note: One can scarcely read these words without visualizing “Gay-Pride” parades in our own city or at Disneyworld... not merely tolerance of Sodomy, but open celebration of it

An air of total defiance of Almighty God

There is a sense that sin is better off hidden, for shame... though God will someday expose every secret sin of the heart

BUT open parading of shameful things as though they were good is the lowest a society can reach

- c. They are defiant sinners... taking on the Lord, defying His glorious presence

## 2. Specific wickedness by the rulers

***Vs. 14-15 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. <sup>15</sup> What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.***

- a. Using their position to crush the poor and needy
- b. Using their power to rob the weak of their possessions
- c. They have forgotten that all authority is from God, and will someday go back to God
- d. Each mayor, each councilman, each representative, each senator, each governor, each secretary of this or that, each ambassador, each cabinet member, each judge, each King, each emperor, and yes, each president will give an account of himself to God, the Judge of all the earth

## 3. BUT a place of refuge for the righteous

***Isaiah 3:10 Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.***

God knows how to make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked

The principle of Judgment Day is always the same:

***Romans 2:6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done."***

#### IV. Loss of Unstable, Luxurious Vainglory (3:16-4:1)

##### A. Pampered Daughters of Zion Lavishing Luxury on Themselves

***Isaiah 3:16-17 The LORD says, "The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. <sup>17</sup> Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the LORD will make their scalps bald."***

1. The arrogant women of Zion have all the “tricks of the trade” for attracting men
  - a. Haughty airs... Flirting with the eyes
  - b. Using jewelry to attract attention... bells jingling on the ankles saying LOOK AT ME!!
  - c. The list of accoutrements of artificial beauty is mind-boggling

***Vs. 18-23 the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, <sup>19</sup> the earrings and bracelets and veils, <sup>20</sup> the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, <sup>21</sup> the signet rings and nose rings, <sup>22</sup> the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses <sup>23</sup> and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls***

2. God gave them abundance and they lavished vainglory on themselves
3. A picture of worldly “beauty” is actually quite repulsive
4. True feminine beauty described by Peter: **a gentle and quiet spirit, submissive to husbands**
5. These “Daughters of Zion” had forsaken true beauty—piety before God—and traded it for the counterfeit kind

##### B. God Takes Away Their Luxury; God Gives Them Judgment Instead

***Vs. 24 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***

##### C. The Fall of the Men Signals the End of Opulence

***Isaiah 3:25-26 Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle. <sup>26</sup> The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground.***

1. Feminine luxury like this can only flourish where men are strong enough to protect the women from invaders

2. Women like this are helpless before the invading hordes...
  - a. The invaders will snatch away everything of value
  - b. Usually the invading army then violates the women and slaughters them
  - c. OR carries them away captive to live as slaves
3. The physical defenses of the city are gone... and these women will suffer

#### D. How the Mighty Have Fallen! Seven Women Begging One Man

***Isaiah 4:1 In that day seven women will take hold of one man and say, "We will eat our own food and provide our own clothes; only let us be called by your name. Take away our disgrace!"***

1. These once-mighty women now beg for the lowest level of existence
2. Seven of them will be willing to live together as one man's pathetic harem
3. They yearn for the stability of a marriage, of a man's protection
4. If only he will take them in... but there will be no more men
5. In that day, the disgrace of Jerusalem will be complete

Summary: Isaiah 3 depicts the utter desolation of the City of Jerusalem... its men are slaughtered, its women rendered to the lowest abject humiliation... there is no leadership left, the city is nothing more than a smoldering heap of ruins

Why? Because of the sins of God's people!

But redemption is drawing nigh!! God will not allow Jerusalem or the People of God to be humiliated in sin forever

#### V. Gain of Stable, Luxurious Glory (4:2-6)

***Isaiah 4:2-6 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. <sup>3</sup> Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. <sup>6</sup> It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.***

##### A. The Branch of the Lord: Jesus Christ



1. Image: A Living Extension of Israel's Humiliation
  - a. The People of God a "stump" when God judges them... we'll see this in Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 11
  - b. Judah and Jerusalem at a despicable low ebb
  - c. It seems nothing can come from this "heap of ruins"
  - d. But a "Branch" will emerge, and from him will come glorious life
2. The "Branch" mentioned many other places in Scripture
  - a. Jeremiah's vision of a Branch from David's lineage

***Jeremiah 23:5-6 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.***

- b. Zechariah 6, after the exile, saw a priest sitting on the throne... he called him the "man whose name is the Branch"... a picture of Christ, the Priest and King, sitting on the throne of David

The smoldering ruins of Jerusalem is NOT the end of God's promises to Abraham or to David

A Branch will emerge, and life will come from Him

His name is Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of this prophecy!!!

3. He will be "Beautiful and Glorious"
  - a. Like the Jews after God's judgment, he had no beauty or majesty... but yet a glorious future

***Isaiah 53:2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.***

- b. But Christ's final appearance will be beautiful and glorious

***Matthew 24:30 They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.***

***Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.***

4. He Will Make the Land Fruitful

***Vs. 2 the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.***

- a. The Promised Land was meant to be lavish, a land flowing with milk and honey... and so it was when Israel first entered it
- b. BUT the sins of the Jews had resulted in the judgment of God, leaving the land like a desert
- c. At the renewal of all things, Christ will make the Promised Land lush and beautiful again
- d. From lush paradise to barren desert, and from barren desert to lush paradise again

B. The Remnant Will Bask in the Glory

***Vs. 2 the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.***

***Vs. 3 Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem.***

1. The word “survivors” = those who escape the wrath to come
2. This lush paradise will be the home of the “remnant”... the “survivors in Israel”
3. “Recorded” = written in God’s book
  - a. Based on Romas 9-11, this speaks of God’s holy predestination of some to life
  - b. Written in the book of life by the sovereign hand of God
  - c. They were appointed for life before the world began, and God protected them, and kept them safe
4. The cleansing of the Remnant

***Isaiah 4:4 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.***

- a. Though they are predestined, yet they are still filthy in sin before the Lord cleanses them
- b. They must be washed, cleansed, renewed before they can be fit for heaven
- c. The cleansing will be perfect, they will be as pure and holy as Christ Himself

- d. And Jerusalem itself will be purified, made holy as a habitation of Almighty God

C. The Dwelling of God is with Men at Last

***Isaiah 4:5-6 Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. <sup>6</sup> It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.***

1. Isaiah finishes by recording the vision of God's holy habitation with His people in a cleansed Jerusalem
2. Strong Hebrew word:

***"The Lord will create..."***

- a. Same word used in Genesis 1... This is the creation of a New Universe... a New Heavens and a New Earth
- b. Only this massive creative action of God could prepare a place for God to dwell amongst such a sinful people in such a defiled city
- c. God, having cleansed both His people and the city of Jerusalem will crown it all off with an open display of His glory as a symbol of His dwelling with the people of God

***He will create a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night***

3. This language hearkens back to the days of the Exodus when God protected His people from all threats with a Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire

Note: here, however, is not a moving pillar but a permanent canopy... a settled presence of the Lord with His people

4. Reminder of the glory cloud to settle on Mt. Sinai, then in the Tabernacle and the Temple... a visible symbol of the dwelling of God with His people
5. From the beginning, God has deeply yearned for one thing: to dwell with His people in face to face loving oneness
  - a. The Tabernacle was a symbol of this desire

***Exodus 25:8 have them make a Tabernacle for me, and I will dwell among them.***

- b. So also the Temple

***[Solomon said] 1 Kings 8:13 I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever."***

c. But it will only be perfected in the future, when God marries Jerusalem

**[Solomon said] 1 Kings 8:27 "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!**

d. The “canopy” here may be more than merely a protective covering... it may be a wedding canopy...

**Vs. 5 over all the glory will be a canopy.**

i) Jewish weddings, the couple stands beneath a canopy

ii) It is a symbol of God’s protection of them

iii) But here, God himself will marry Jerusalem and dwell in her midst forever

6. So God will “Marry” Jerusalem... and God and His people will make a happy home there forever

**Isaiah 62:4-5 as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.**

**Revelation 21:1-3 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.**

7. The Lasting Image is one of Total Protection from All Suffering

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

a. The heat of the day is scorching in that part of the world... God’s presence with His people will shelter them from any discomfort

b. So also the storm and rain will not beat down upon the New Jerusalem, for God will make it a place of perfect peace

## VI. Application

A. Flee to Christ... Judgment Day is Coming for Us All!!

B. Pray for Our Nation

1. We are much like this
2. We lack godly, strong men to be leaders
3. We have people in our midst who brazenly celebrate sin and parade it like Sodom
4. We have poor in our midst and do not seem to care for them the way Christ would
5. We need national and personal repentance
6. Our food supply is not so permanent as people think: food we eat comes on average a distance of more than a thousand miles away; if the shipping industries or petroleum failed, we would lose our present lifestyle
7. We should be humbly seeking God's face for the future of our nation and not arrogantly assume things will always go on as they have

C. Thank God for Qualified, Godly Leaders and Craftsman Alike

1. If there are qualified leaders in churches, or governments, they are gifts of God to hold a society together
2. If there are skilled craftsmen, able to do skillful work, they are a gift of God to beatify life on the earth
3. Thank God for all God-ordained societal roles if they are done skillfully
4. AND ask for God to protect them from falling into sin

D. Men: Seek Genuine Leadership as Defined by God

1. True biblical leadership is SERVANT leadership, as Christ taught us
2. Men should lead, in society, in churches, and especially in homes
3. But they should lead not as pagan tyrants who used a "Might makes right" approach and used their positions to glut their senses with pleasures
4. They should lay down their lives for those they govern as Christ did

E. Women: Seek Genuine Beauty as Defined by God

***1 Peter 3:3-4 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. <sup>4</sup> Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.***

F. Ask God to Purify Your Heart and Your Life

1. Fire burns through this passage... the fire of God's holiness
2. Ask God to search out the wickedness and chaff from your heart and your life
3. Ask God to purify you and make you ready for fruitful service on earth and eternal joy in heaven
4. See if there is any offensive way in you:
  - a. Any yearning for worldly luxury
  - b. Any yearning for worldly power
  - c. Any yearning for worldly beauty
  - d. Ask God to purify you with the fire of the Holy Spirit and wash you clean with the water of His word

G. Look Forward to the Glorious Wedding Day: When Christ will Marry the New Jerusalem