

# The Collapse of Society

Isaiah 3:1 – 4:1

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Today in our sermon series in Isaiah we come to chapter 3.

- I mentioned to you a couple of weeks ago that chapters 2-4 are all connected together.
  - Chapter 2 begins with the declaration that two glorious things will happen in the latter days...
    - God's house will be established...
    - All the nations will flow to it with eagerness to obtain salvation from God.
  - The language shows that these two things will be characteristic of the latter days.
    - We saw that the latter days refer to the entire period from Christ's first advent to His return at the end of the world.
      - Throughout this whole period God would have an established house—furnished with remission of sin by Christ's sacrifice and with the Holy Spirit by His gracious gift—
      - And throughout the whole period there would be the influx of Gentiles to receive these blessings.
- And so in view of all this, Isaiah calls upon the house of Jacob—the visible church in his day—to come and walk in the light of the LORD.
  - They were privileged to already have the light of the Lord that the nations would come to in the latter days.
    - And so it was only fitting for the house Judah to walk in the light...
  - And we have seen that this admonition pertains to us today who live among God's covenant people today—in a land where the light of the gospel has been enjoyed for many generations...
    - The nations who just now learning of the light are still turning to this light with eagerness,
      - and it is a most shameful thing if we who have long had the light have grown cold toward our privileges!
      - It bespeaks of blindness and wicked ungratefulness.
- But this is exactly what Israel had done and sadly it is exactly what we have done.
  - In 2:6-9, Isaiah explains that instead of being full of the grace of God that is constantly held out to His own people,

- they are full of all sorts of other things—vile practices of pagans, covetous attachment to riches, reliance upon their own military, and engagement in idolatry...
  - Rather than being filled with Christ, they are filled with these other things.
  - While the beauty and glory of Christ might have filled them, they are filled with vanity like the nations who are alienated from the LORD.
  
- In 2:10-21, we saw what the LORD has purposed to do...
  - He has appointed a day when He will reveal His glory upon them!
    - And when that glory is revealed, everything that is exalted (both people and the things they have exalted) will be brought down.
      - When that day comes, these people who have walked about in defiant pride will be humbled and brought low.
      - They will see how wrong they were—and how foolish they were—and how detestable they were to trust in vain things...
        - but it will be too late—
        - God’s glory will envelop them in everlasting judgement and they will have no way to escape.
  
- And so the prophet gives the admonition in 2:22:
  - Isaiah 2:22: Sever yourselves from such a man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils; For of what account is he?
    - Do not trust in men that go proudly and confidently strutting about as if they have no need of the LORD and of His salvation...
      - Do not follow them in their pursuit to fill their lives with pagan practices, riches, military security, and idolatry rather than Christ!
  - Do not follow those who lead you trust in such things or you will be led to ruin and destruction.
    - There is no safety in these men, however confident they may appear.
    - Their breath is in their nostrils...
      - They cannot even live without air
        - The LORD can snuff them out by simply removing their breath from them—the breath that He gave them to start with.
        - They are of no account, for they have no strength but what the LORD gives to them moment by moment.
        - The very strength they use to walk proudly before Him is the strength He provides to them.

My brothers and sisters, this is so important for us to hear!

- We were born in sin and it is always our tendency to follow men who exalt themselves against the LORD.
  - This is especially the case when they, in some sense, claim to be His people.
    - Whether they are judges or governors or preachers or any other kind of leader, they are not be followed.
    - Adam and Eve fell in the Garden by following bad counsel,
      - And Satan would have the church apostatise by listening to bad counsel today—indeed he has often caused it to fall!
      - Satan sends his own servants into Christian nations and Christian churches to lead people astray...to lead them away from Christ...
        - And here Isaiah teaches us to sever ourselves from such men whose breath is in their nostrils.
  - Brothers and sisters, look around us and what do you see today?
    - What sort of persons are being followed today?
    - What sort of leaders do we have in our churches?
    - What are our governors and judges like?
    - What are our tradesmen like?
    - What sort of women are being imitated?

In chapter 3, Isaiah tells the people of his day that the leading men and women in their society—the movers and shapers of their society—were bringing destruction to their society...

- They were destroying the society they were supposed to be building for God's glory!
  - The nation was crumbling under their leadership because of their ungodliness and vanity.
  - And as we look at this chapter today,
    - we will see that what Isaiah says about the leaders of his day is also true of the leaders in our day.
    - They are, by their wicked rebellion against the LORD, brining down His judgements upon the society.
      - Isaiah shows that things are going to become quite desperate—as they will for us in our society—
        - But then in chapter 4,
          - He tells us that even in the midst of all the ruin and destruction, the branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious!

- The City of God continues under His gracious care and protection in Jesus Christ.
- Though all around is destroyed, those who are written in the book of life...
  - all the elect—
    - go forward in the blessing of God through Jesus Christ.
- Do not trust in those leaders who promise you prosperity but lead you to destruction...
  - Sever yourself from such men whose breath is in their nostrils.
  - Rather trust rather in the LORD.
- We will not dig in to chapter 4 today, but I want you to realise that that is where Isaiah goes with all this...
  - The house he tells us about in chapter 2 that God will establish and that will draw in the nations will always remain and it will always be beautiful glorious—
    - and we must see to it that we continue in that house by faith...or we will not be blessed when destruction comes upon our nation.
- Let us consider carefully what Isaiah says about ungodly leadership and the ruin it brings to a society.
  - We will look at two things...
    - First, at where wicked and inept leaders come from.
    - Secondly, at what the LORD does with these corrupt leaders.

## **I. See (first of all) where wicked and inept leaders come from**

### **A. They come from the LORD.**

#### **1. Does that surprise you?**

- a. Many people suppose that good leaders come from God and that bad leaders do not come from God, but from the Devil.

- 1) But that is not true at all—that is not what the Bible teaches...

- 2) The Bible teaches that **all** leaders come from the LORD.

- It is true that the wicked ones belong to Satan and are inspired and led along by him—that is all quite true...
  - But to say that they do not come from God is completely false.
  - The Bible teaches that **all** leaders are given by God.

- b. This principle was taught in a very striking way to King Nebuchadnezzar.
- 1) He was the king of Babylon that the LORD raised up to bring judgement upon Jerusalem—
    - Nebuchadnezzar's was the king who conquered the whole world...
    - He was the king who destroyed the temple at Jerusalem and who carried away all the leaders into exile.
  - 2) In the height of his glory, he made this boast, according to Daniel 4:30:
    - Daniel 4:30: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?"
    - As soon as he made this boast, he was struck down by the LORD and driven outside to live as a beast...
      - This was done for seven years until he learned, as Daniel put it, that:
        - Dan 4:32: "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses."
  - 3) You see from this that the wicked King Nebuchadnezzar was given his dominion every bit as much as the godly King David was given His.
    - Every king is put in place by the Lord.
      - Some are raised up as an expression of God's anger to judge His people, others are raised up as an expression of His mercy to deliver them...
      - In Hosea 13:11 the LORD tells the people,
        - Hosea 13:11: "I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath."
- c. In Paul's epistle to the Romans,
- Paul tells us in chapter 13 that there is no authority except from God and that the authorities that exist are appointed by God.
    - He calls these leaders God's ministers—those He has raised up for His purposes.
  - Over and over in scripture, they are referred to as accomplishing His purposes whether it be to attack Jerusalem or to deliver Jerusalem.
    - In Romans 9, we are reminded how God said to Pharaoh,
      - Rom 9:17: "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."
    - Pharaoh's rule, like the rule of every king and every prince and every governor who has ever ruled,
      - is integral to God's purposes in the history of the world.

2. And so it should not surprise us when we are told in Isaiah 3:1-5
  - First, that the Lord takes away the pillars that uphold the society...
  - And second, that He replaces them with pillars that cannot uphold the society.
  - a. In verse 1-3, we are told that He takes away the pillars that uphold the society.
    - 1) It is an ugly picture—everything that sustains and holds a society up is removed...
      - The whole stock and store...
      - Everything that the people depend on to uphold them...
        - Everything from their bread and water to their leaders great and small.
    - 2) See how Isaiah lists them out...
      - a) The very staples of bread and water will be taken...
        - There are economic hardships that make it increasingly difficult for people to live and provide...
      - b) The mighty man and the man of war—
        - These are often taken in a declining society by making them soft and effeminate—incapable of defending the nation...
      - c) The judge—the one who is appointed to uphold justice becomes incapable of sentencing the wicked and justifying the righteous...
        - There is no law enforcement—the streets are not safe—property is not safe...
          - Surely we see examples of this every day.
      - d) The prophet is taken away—the one who declares the will of God...
        - The people and their leaders are left to wonder about without the light of His truth.
          - This would refer to pastors and teachers in our day who declare the will of God to us.
      - e) The diviner—this may refer to illegitimate leaders who employ superstitious arts—
        - who were resorted to by Israel in their wickedness...
          - but it may simply refer to those who were able to understand matters with great acuteness and skill.

- f) The elder—not that there would be no old people, but that there would be no wise men among them to lead them...
  - It is a sorry thing that in many churches today, there are none who are qualified to serve as elders.
    - God takes them away in His judgement.
- g) The list goes on...
  - And you see that it even includes the skilful artisan—the tradesmen...
    - Those the society depends on to provide goods and services...
    - Today we see a decline in the trades...
      - Every one wants easy jobs so they can spend their time text messaging and surfing the net.

TRANS> You see here that God takes all of these away...

- Now see that He is also the one who replaces them...

b. He replaces them with those that cannot properly run the society.

1) In verse 4, the LORD says:

- Isa 3:4: I will give children *to be* their princes, And babes shall rule over them.
- When competent and capable men are removed,
  - incompetent and capricious men come forward to replace them.
  - Now of course Isaiah does not mean that babes will be on the throne, but those who are immature and self-centred like babes.

2) But brothers and sisters,

- This has come upon our society in an almost literal way...
- a) Increasingly, we are seeing children making major decisions because those who ought to be making decisions are so foppish and inept!
  - Not too long ago, I heard of a church in which one of the teaching elders recommended that the elders needed to step aside and let the youth decide what the church should look like!
    - Here God has appointed elders to be responsible for following God's directives and this man wants children to take over!
- b) There are families that have a little child who runs the show—
  - The child decides when to eat and when to sleep—what to eat and when to play—when to go home and when to stay.

- c) I have also seen fathers, who instead of bearing the weighty responsibility of deciding where to go to church make that decision based on which church their two year old prefers—
  - or which church their teenagers like the best.
  - This is insane!
  - But this is what happens when God turns a society over to ruin...
    - And this is what is happening in our society.
  
- 3) Now of course I do not mean to say that parents should not listen to their children and understand their concerns and preferences...
  - Good leadership listens and understands so it can address the heart and lead the child in the right direction...
    - but it does not listen so that it can be directed by the whims of a child.
  - We live in a day in which everything from morals to fashion to church music is determined by the youth.
    - It is a sign of a society under God's judgement.
  
- 4) Interestingly, in a society such as this,
  - The leaders often give up their authority in an effort to gain the affection of those under their care...
    - Instead of leading, they constantly give in to them...
    - Instead of correcting them, they let them off...
    - Instead of counselling them, they leave them alone...
  - But instead of winning the affection of those under their care, they only win their contempt and rebellion...
    - Parents who indulge their children have children that hate them!
    - Magistrates and church leaders who do not uphold God's law have citizens and parishioners who despise them.
    - The whole society becomes full of chaos and confusion...
      - Oppression grows so that everyone is turned against everyone else...
        - There is fighting, there is cursing, there is stealing, there is immorality, there is cheating and lying and every disorder.
        - When wickedness is not restrained, the people will go astray.



- See how Isaiah describes this as the state of affairs that will come about when these immature leaders are brought in:
    - Isa 3:5: The people will be oppressed, Every one by another and every one by his neighbour; The child will be insolent toward the elder, And the base toward the honourable.
- c. And besides giving them leaders that are unfit, the Lord will also make everyone apathetic about leading...
- 1) In verse 6-7, the scene is pitiful scene is described in which a man takes hold of another man to convince him to rule—
    - The nominee’s only qualification is that he has clothing...
      - But he does not want to be bothered....
        - He wants no part of it!
        - He feels that there is nothing he can do to help anyway...
          - He’d rather go and watch the hockey game.
  - 2) This is a sure characteristic of a ruined society...
    - a) No one who might be able to help is willing to do so...
      - They have no interest in it...
      - They have no confidence in the Lord...
      - They are like Elijah when he went up on the mountain and wanted to die because Israel would not repent.
    - b) The young people in such a society do not prepare themselves for service...
      - They do not think in terms of preparing themselves in the word to raise up their own godly children...
      - The boys do not think of preparing themselves to serve as tradesmen, elders, ministers, and the like...
        - They are content to do the least possible to get by.
        - Television, sports, hanging out, hobbies—this is all they have.
          - They strive after nothing that is excellent.
      - And the girls—instead of preparing the minds and their talents to love their husbands and children never even consider fill their time with frivolous conversation and idleness.

TRANS> Is this not just the way it has become in our society?

3. Now you must learn from this that a well ordered society is the gift of God...

- Such societies do not just happen...
  - They are of the undeserved mercy of God to preserve the world and to maintain peace on the earth.
- The Lord is the one who gives good leaders and who takes them away.
  - They are His ministers and we are to count it as a great mercy inasmuch as we have a well ordered society,
    - but we are to be humbled inasmuch as our society is in disarray.

TRANS> For Isaiah shows us the reason that the LORD takes away good order from a society...

- He does this because of us...

B. He does this as a judgement because of the rebellion of His people

1. He does it when a Christian society becomes brazen in their sin (v. 8-9)

- a. I said before that it might seem strange to hear that the LORD will remove good government and replace it with bad...
  - but you can see that He gives us His reason for doing this in verse 8-9...
    - Verse 8 begins with the word “for.”
      - It is giving the reason for His overthrow of good order:
        - Isa 3:8-9: For Jerusalem stumbled, And Judah is fallen, Because their tongue and their doings *Are* against the LORD, To provoke the eyes of His glory. The look on their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide *it*.

1) He does this, even to a Christian society, because we have stumbled and fallen—

- We need not go into all the details, for we covered this last week...
  - Instead being filled with Christ and the full, abundant, precious life that He gives to His people who look to Him,
    - we fill ourselves with other things as though life comes from them...
      - pagan practices, riches, military security, and idolatry...

2) The Lord charges His people with turning against Him in both word and deed...

- their “tongues” and their “doings”
  - Here we have been given our tongues to praise His name and to bless and encourage each other...

- And instead we speak lies, blasphemy, and gossip, and harsh words proceed from our mouths...
  - And here we have been given our bodies to work for the glory of God and the good of our neighbour,
    - but instead we use them for covetousness and immorality!
- 3) And what is worst of all, the LORD says that a wicked society engages in all this sin for the very purpose of provoking Him!
- Sometimes this is a pretty subtle thing—a thing that we don't readily admit...
    - But if you examine yourself closely,
      - you will find that you most often sin when you are bummed out with God—when you are full of self-pity—when you focus on how He has supposedly wronged you instead of looking at how merciful and gracious He has been.
  - Our sin is not just simple passion—just a following of our desires...
    - It is much worse than that...
      - It is what we do to get at the Lord—it is **against** Him to provoke Him.
      - It is because we do not love Him.
- 4) And when things get really bad, we don't even pretend that our sin is not rebellion against the LORD...
- a) We make it clear and plain that we are doing our wickedness to spite Him...
- The very look on our faces witnesses against us—the hardness and the bitterness are clearly seen with one glance...
- b) Hypocrisy is a terrible thing—when a person who does not love the LORD pretends to love Him...
- But I tell you, a society is far worse when it doesn't even pretend any more!
    - When there is open and proud defiance against the LORD as there is in our society today!
    - When there is no fear to openly and brazenly war against God!
    - When there is no shame to walk contrary to Him.

TRANS> I tell you, when a society reaches that state,

- you can be sure that the LORD will send disorder and judgement.

- The Lord give this as the reason He is raising up bad government...
- b. In this sense, he charges us with bringing bad government upon ourselves...
  - That is why at the end of verse 9, the prophet says...
    - “Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves!”
  - When there is rebellion such as we have in our land,
    - We are *asking* for bad government to be given to us...
    - We are asking the LORD to bring evil and disorder upon us.
    - We have no one to blame but ourselves...
- 2. In verses 10-12, the LORD shows that He gives us the leaders we deserve.
  - a. In verse 10, he says that the righteous will be blessed...
    - in the context, blessed with good government.
      - v. 10: “Say to the righteous that *it shall be well with them*, For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.”
    - This is the principle of Scripture that you reap what you sow...
      - If you, by God’s grace, are seeking to filled with Jesus Christ, God will give you those leaders that will help you to do that—
      - He promises that the hungry soul will be filled.
  - b. But if you are pursuing your own way—if you are spurning the salvation and blessing of Christ—if you are not seeking Him...
    - You can be sure that it will not go well with you—you too will reap what you sow...
      - If you want laxity for yourself, you will have laxity in your society...
      - If you want to be unrestrained, the Lord will take away your restraint...
      - If you are not thankful for God’s correction, you will be given governors and leaders and ministers who will never correct you!
        - You will be brought into a state of the greatest disorder and chaos...
    - Is that not what it says in verse 11?
      - Isa 3:11: “Woe to the wicked! *It shall be ill with him*, For the reward of his hands shall be given him.”
  - c. So which was the case with God’s people, as a whole, in Isaiah’s day?
    - 1) Now remember, when I say,

- “God’s people as a whole,”
    - I am speaking of all the circumcised—
    - What was the character of the covenant people as a corporate entity made up of both the faithful and the unfaithful?
    - Were they characterised by righteousness or wickedness?
- 2) Well you can tell by looking at what kind of leadership the LORD was giving them...
- We have already seen this, but in verse 12 the LORD repeats it...
    - Isa 3:12: “*As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths.*”
  - They must be characterised by wickedness because they have children oppressing them and women ruling over them.
    - Now my brothers and sisters, God has nothing against women and children, but He has not appointed them to govern in a well-ordered society...
      - No—in a well ordered society the men will take their place as leaders.
      - The women will not be required to fight and compete and strive with the men in the market place,
        - to go into combat or to sentence an offender to be executed or to preach a sermon...
        - We call this liberation of women, but it is rather bondage that comes when there are no men to lead.
  - Yes, you see, there is a reversal of roles in a disordered society...
    - The women establish law and order and go into hard labour in place of the men...
      - only the men in a disordered society never seem able to take the place of the women as nurturers of children and as those who care for the poor and the sick.
        - Instead, these tasks are simply cast off.
          - The men simply do nothing.
  - The idea here, however, is not necessarily that women and children were actually ruling—
    - but that those who were ruling and leading were like women and children—they were not able to lead the society.

- When women can take the pulpit in a church, there can only be one reason for it...
    - because the church has already been choosing men who **act** like women for their ministers and elders for a long time...
      - If men who act like women are deemed to be the most qualified sort of person for the pulpit and for ruling in the church,
        - then why not elect them to the office?
  - Again, this is not that women are evil or inferior but rather that they are not designed to be pastors and elders and judges.
    - It is not what God has called them to do because He has called them to do something else that is just as important...
    - He has made them to be gentle—to make the home a blessing.
- d. And so we see in verse 12 that the character of the leadership that God had given to Israel was two-fold...
- It was oppressive and
  - It was that which caused the people to err by destroying the way of their paths...
    - Rather than restraining wickedness, it allowed wickedness to flourish.
    - The paths of righteousness that had been clearly defined by the LORD were not defined by these leaders...
      - Everyone was allowed to wander wherever they wished without restraint—just as it is in our society!

TRANS> The LORD appoints leaders like this to chasten His people...

- He is the one who raises them up as a punishment...
  - But that does not mean that these wicked leaders will be rewarded!
  - Quite the contrary!
    - They are not exempt from judgement simply because they are His ministers.
      - It is just the opposite—
        - They are subject to a much stricter judgement as those who represent Him!
- Let us turn, then, to our second division and...

## **II. See what the LORD does with these corrupt leaders**

A. See that He stands up to judge them...

1. Verse 13 is another court room scene (such as we have already seen in Isaiah).
  - When it says that the LORD stands up to plead,
    - It means that He stand up to plead His case as a prosecutor.
    - He will defend the justice of His action in bringing destruction and disorder upon His people.
2. And you see that He especially is said to judge the elders and princes who have oppressed His people and led them into error!
  - a. Look at verse 14. It says
    - Isa 3:14: The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and His princes: For you have eaten up the vineyard; The plunder of the poor *is* in your houses.
  - b. Here, His people are viewed as a vineyard that He planted and tends.
    - The LORD Jesus used this same picture in some of His parables that were spoken against the wicked rulers of His day.
    - In sharp contrast with the Lord,
      - these leaders were not there to serve, but to get whatever they could by oppression or whatever means they could get away with.
  - c. In verse 15, the LORD accuses them of crushing His people and grinding the faces of the poor.
    - He is very angry with them for this behaviour.
      - They were supposed to be representing His government as His ministers, instead they were using their position for personal advantage.
    - Understand who He is that speaks!
      - He is the Lord GOD of hosts!
        - The sovereign, self-existing One who rules over all!
    - He is the One who in His high position was to come down from heaven to redeem them!
      - He was the One who, from His high position, came down to give Himself as a sacrifice for their sins!
      - And all this was done in order that He might purify a people who would be zealous for good works—a people reconciled to the LORD who would love the LORD with all their heart and delight in His way.

- It is hard to imagine how these leaders could have more grossly misrepresented Him than by grinding the faces of the poor and by destroying the paths in which they were to walk!

TRANS> So the LORD is pictured as arising to judge them!

- But before His judgement falls upon these wicked rulers and elders,
  - I want you to notice something...

B. Notice that He allows them to “prosper” for a time.

1. You see that they become full of excess and luxury.

a. We have already seen that they are guilty of eating up the vineyard and grinding the faces of the poor...

- They are successful in taking everything that belongs to the people.

b. They become extremely rich by this method...

1) You see how the leading women are described in verse 16...

- Isa 3:16: Moreover the LORD says: "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, And walk with outstretched necks And wanton eyes, Walking and mincing *as* they go, Making a jingling with their feet,

- They are all about clothing and appearance and drawing attention to themselves...

- They are all trying to outdo the others...

- Look at the huge list that is given in verses 18-23...

- Isa 3:18-23: The jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents; The pendants, the bracelets, and the veils; The headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; The perfume boxes, the charms, and the rings; The nose jewels, the festal apparel, and the mantles; The outer garments, the purses, and the mirrors; The fine linen, the turbans, and the robes.” (Isa 3:18-23 NKJV)

- We do not even know exactly what all this is,

- but we certainly get the idea!

- These are the leading ladies...and their chief end is to attract attention.

2) What a far cry this is from the counsel that Paul gives to women in Titus:

- Titus 2:3-5: the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.



- These women in Isaiah's day are prancing all over town trying to attract attention to themselves.
    - Instead of shining for Christ in their homes, they are seeking to show off in public.
  - It is amazing to see how widespread this kind of leadership has gone in our society...
    - The disease of immodesty has spread from the Hollywood elite to almost every member of our society...
- c. But I want you to notice that for a time the LORD allows this to go on unchecked...
- He allows the oppressive leaders to prosper and to have such an abundance that they and their wives can live in this kind of luxury!
    - They swallow up everything that has been laid up by the hard work of previous generations...
      - they eat up what they and their people did not produce, but what their fathers produced and laid up as a heritage for them...
        - They spend all that they can get their hands on!
  - If any society has excelled in this greed, it is our own!
    - When the leaders of our day found that they were exhausting all that our fathers laid up,
      - they came up with a scheme of oppression to rival all others!
        - They began to borrow from future generations...
        - Having spent up all that our fathers had laid up, they took it upon themselves to run up a bill for our children!
        - That way, we can be happy and prosperous now and they can be elected to office and be even more happy and prosperous.

TRANS> And you see that the LORD allows these wicked leaders and this wicked society to prosper in this way for a time!

## 2. Why does He do this?

- a. He does this because the very reason He raised up these unprincipled leaders was for the chastisement of His people...
  - He raises up leaders who run the society right into the ground...
  - They destroy order and they spend up every penny until nothing is left but chaos and extreme poverty!

- Everyone tries to ignore what is happening.

TRANS> The LORD lets these leaders go on until all is ruined.

- They will prosper for a time...
- b. But judgement will come upon them and upon their society in due time.
- This has happened in one society after another...
    - It happened in Israel when the wicked kings spent all that David had laid up until the exile came upon them...
    - It happened in Babylon when Belshazzar spent all that his grandfather, King Nebuchadnezzar had laid up and led the people into such delicacy that they were easily invaded...
    - It happened in the Roman empire when strong leaders were replaced with sensual and effeminate men who were oppressors and who destroyed all that the previous generations had built...
  - Are we really any different?
    - Can we imagine that things will go any differently for us now that we have become soft and lazy and full of luxury?
    - Are we not at same place the people were at in Isaiah's day?
      - Enjoying the last remains of unprincipled prosperity before the bill collectors and come and we have nothing with which to pay?

C. See how the LORD brings down His judgement upon the whole society...

1. Isaiah present a complete reversal in the prosperity...

- a. The reversal is introduced in verse 17:
- Isa 3:17: Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, And the LORD will uncover their secret parts.
  - In verse 18-23, all the finery that I listed of before is said to be taken away...
    - all this that had been their whole life will disappear...
- b. In verse 24, a graphic picture of the change is given...
- Isa 3:24: "And so it shall be:
    - Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; (no more perfume)
    - Instead of a sash, a rope; (prison clothes will replace the lovely garments)
    - Instead of well-set hair, baldness; (the hair will be shaved in morning)

- Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; (potato bags will replace soft clothes)
  - And branding instead of beauty. (they will be branded like cattle who belong to another).
- c. Besides this, Isaiah explains that most of the men will be lost in battle, leaving the nation in lamentation and desperation...
- Isa 3:25 – 4:1: Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty in the war. Her gates shall lament and mourn, and she *being* desolate shall sit on the ground. And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, “We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, To take away our reproach.”
  - The women who once pranced around will now be desperate to find husbands in a society decimated by war.
    - They who had despised their families will now earnestly desire to take their place as wives and mothers...
      - No longer able to have public attention, domestic attention will seem desirable to them even if they must share a husband with seven other women and pay their own way.
2. The entire society is brought to desperate conditions, yet this is not the end.
- a. This judgement that brings the collapse of society is to be contrasted with the judgement described in chapter 2 that comes at the last day.
- The judgement of chapter 2 that we looked at last week is much worse...
    - In that day, the glory of the LORD is revealed and complete destruction is brought upon the wicked...
    - It is the day when it will be too late for forgiveness...
- b. But the judgement we looked at today is one that comes upon societies that have become proud and corrupt...
- It is not the final judgement.
  - It brings times that are very hard, but it is not the end of the society...
    - Hard things have to be born, but everlasting destruction does not come.
- c. And the best news is the news of the branch of the LORD that is given to us in 4:2-6.
- We will look at this in detail next week...
    - But the idea is that when all this destruction comes, the LORD will still have a people who love Him...

- There will still be a remnant according to election...
  - And even in the very day when all this judgement falls, the branch of the LORD will still be glorious...
  - There will still be those who are in Jesus Christ and no matter what happens to the society and the church,
    - they will be protected by the grace of the LORD and will shine gloriously through it all.
      - They will be as Daniels in the exile...
      - They will be as the Maccabees under Antiochus Epiphanes.
      - They will be as the disciples' of Christ at the fall of Jerusalem...

### **Conclusion**

- The great question for you is—where are you now?
  - Are you with our society in its rebellion against the LORD? Are you just following along the broad way that leads to destruction?
  - Or are you seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?
    - Are you holding fast to Jesus Christ and leaving all to follow Him, looking to Him for your blessing?
      - If you are, then you are part of the Branch—Christ is the branch!
      - The branch is where true beauty and glory is found in our wanton society...
      - And it is where true beauty and glory will be found when our society collapses as it inevitably will...
        - You have nothing to fear if you are in Christ...
          - I do not mean that you will not suffer when our society collapses...
          - But I mean that the suffering will not harm you...
            - it will only add to your beauty and glory.