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The Women of Zion Are Haughty

3:16 to 4:1

The women of Zion are haughty **DIG**: How are the women pictured in these verses? What reference to their captivity do you see? What judgment upon the men is really meant for the women? How do you account for this (3:9)? Since being unmarried and childless was considered a disgrace, how is God's judgment appropriate to their sin? What contrasts are made between 3:16, 3:24 and 4:1?

REFLECT: How do you see the same haughty, self-centered attitudes reflected in people around you? How does their idea of beauty compare with that of First Peter 3:3-4? Do you think such inner beauty applies to mankind as well? How have you tried to develop this inner beauty on your own? How has God's discipline led to growth in your life? What has God taken away from you so that He could come back to Him?

Isaiah turns from the leading men of **Jerusalem (3:1-15)** to its leading **women** (see my commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click GJ - Jeremiah's Final Word to the Judeans in Egypt**), and finds the same spirit of arrogant self-satisfaction that was the death warrant of **Tziyon**. In an extremely powerful picture, **Isaiah** makes the whole argument concrete. Because of **their** pride **they** exceeded **their** authority. **They** were the ones who persuaded **their** husbands to carry out the sins that were listed earlier. **They** walked around with **their** noses up in the air because **they** believed **they** were so influential. **Isaiah** contrasted what **they** looked like, and then what **they** will look like after **God's** judgment comes upon them both in the Babylonian captivity and during the Great Tribulation.



ADONAI says: **The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with short steps** because of the hobbling effects of **ornaments jingling on their ankles (3:16)**. This is a description of the dancing girls who were trained as prostitutes for service in the idolatrous temples. When these **females** dance **they** stretch forth **their necks**, and hold **them** awry, as if **their** heads were about to fall off **their** shoulders. And as **they** glide along they roll **their** eyes (which are painted), and cast wanton glances on those around.¹⁰ The ornaments attached to the **ankles** were made of gold, silver, or iron, according to the taste of **the women** and are still worn by Oriental **women** today. **They** are sometimes quite heavy, and special pains are taken to strike **them** together, in order to make a jingle. When **they** are hollow, as is often the case, the sharp sound is increased. In Egypt and in India some of the anklets have small round bells attached to **them**, and these bells sometimes have little pebbles in **them**, which strike like tiny clappers. It may have been the same way that **the wife of Jeroboam** announced **her** presence. **So when Ahijah** (who could not see) **heard the sound of her footsteps at the door**, he said: **Come in, wife of Jeroboam (First Kings 14:6)**.

*The result of their confrontation with **the LORD** will be humiliation, a stripping away of any attempt to exalt themselves. Those who depend upon precious jewels, elegant **necklaces**, fluttering eyes, **and ornaments jingling on their ankles**, found themselves with shaven heads, the worldwide sign of female disgrace.*

They consumed **themselves** with presenting a certain image before **the men** of

their society. **God's** response struck at the heart of the problem. Since **they** focused on **their** external beauty, **He** would take it all away. **They** would lose **their** soft skin and **their** flowing hair. Stress ages people. When **they** looked old and haggard, who would want **them** then? **Therefore, the LORD will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; ADONAI will make their scalps bald (3:17). Their** pampered bodies would attract attention in another way; **they** would have **sores** on **their bald** heads.

The phrase, **in that day**, is used three times in the context, here in **3:18**, in **4:1** and again in **4:21**. When it used, it is always a reference to the Great Tribulation. Therefore, **Isaiah** starts out with **a near historical prophecy** of the Babylonian captivity and changes to **a far eschatological** (or end times) **prophecy** of the Tribulation period. **In that day they** trusted in **their** beauty, but **their** beauty will be destroyed. **God** will expose **them**.

Isaiah lists twenty-one luxury items in which these **women** were trusting. **In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the jewels and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings and wrist bracelets and veils, the headdresses and ankle bracelets and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls (3:18-23).** There was nothing inherently wrong with these items. But because **they** had become more important than **ADONAI** in **their** lives, **they** had to be removed. It was by means of these expensive items that **they** walked around haughtily. As a result, **they** persuaded **their** husbands to steal from widows and the orphans to be able to purchase **them**. Instead of having beauty, **they** will look like wretched beggars. **They** will be led into captivity like pitiful prisoners disfigured by being treated so badly by **their** captors.

Instead of fragrance, there will be stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding (3:24). In place of fragrance there will be a stench. **Instead of a beautiful sash** around **their** waist, **they** will wear the rope of a prisoner. **Instead of well-dressed hair, they** will be shamed with baldness. The **women** of the east have always paid special attention to dressing the hair. Folds, braids, and tresses in every variety are a source of pride. On the other hand, **baldness** is considered a calamity and is made an occasion for contempt.¹¹ Thus the change from **well-dressed hair** to **baldness** would be catastrophic. **Instead of fine clothing, they** will wear the **sackcloth** of mourning. Instead of **beauty**,

they will be branded on the forehead, which was the custom of conquerors. But what will hurt these Jewish **women** the most is not the mistreatment, but the reduction of the male population.

The LORD would not only take away **their** beauty, but **He** would also slay the **men they** wanted to attract. **Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle (3:25). The gates of Zion**, where earlier men assembled in great numbers, will be reduced to a mere few **women**, who **will lament and mourn; destitute**, they **will sit on the ground (3:26). The daughter of Zion** herself is swept clean, totally emptied, laying on the ground in total humiliation.

Their obsession with attracting **men** would become worse as **they** realized how few **men** were left after battle. **In that day seven women will take hold of one man (4:1a)**. In **3:6** the men **take hold of a man**, seeking a ruler; but here **the women take hold of a man**, seeking a husband. So it would be in the Jerusalem that **Isaiah** foresaw. No longer would they be able to flirt **their** way into marriage.

During the Tribulation period there is going to be such a drastic reduction of the **male** Jewish population that **in that day** there will be a ratio of **seven women to one man** in the Jewish world (That might cause several of you to become post-tribulationists right there!). In the biblical times as well as today, one of the great disgraces in the Jewish world is to be unmarried (**Isaiah 54:4**) and childless (**Genesis 30:23**). The Jewish girls will hear, "So, why aren't you married yet?" Because of this reproach against Jewish unmarried **women** in the Tribulation, **seven women** will ask a Jewish **man** to marry **them**, and **they** will not even ask **him** to provide the basic necessities that a husband is supposed to provide. The legal requirements that every married **woman** had a right to expect were food and clothing (**Exodus 21:10**); but **they** will not demand even these basic requirements of the Torah. **They** will say: **We will eat our own food and provide our own clothes; only let us be called by our name. Please take away our disgrace (4:1b)**.

Sitting **on the ground** was a posture that denoted deep distress. Even **Job's comforters** came to sympathize with **him**: **They sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him because they saw how great his suffering was (Job 2:13)**. When the Jews were in captivity, it is said: **By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion (Psalm 137:1)**. **Jeremiah** also alludes to the same custom in **Lamentations 2:10 and 3:28**. The same idea is represented in a more intensified form when **he** says:

O my people, put on sackcloth and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter wailing as for an only son, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us (Jeremiah 6:26). Micah also says: Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all. In Beth Ophrah roll in the dust (Micah 1:10).¹² So this will be a time of great distress.

Most of the Roman coins which were made in commemoration of the capture of Jerusalem have on one side the figure of a woman sitting on the ground, usually, though not in every instance, under the shade of a palm tree. The figure is generally represented with one hand to the head, which rests upon it inclining forward, and the other hanging over the knee, thus presenting a picture of great grief. In one instance, however, the hands are tied behind the back. These coins were issued during the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, some of them being made in Judea, and some in Rome. They are of gold, silver, and brass, and give an apt illustration of what is referred to here.¹³

In **2:2-4, Isaiah** started out describing the Messianic Kingdom where everything will be perfect for Isra'el, but then **he** contrasted that with the indictment and judgment on the nation. How often **ADONAI** works in the lives of **His children** in the same way today. **He** knows if we value something more than we value **Him**, and **He** is able to take it away, it will drive us back to **His** loving arms where we belong.