



Isaiah 3:16-4:1

Cleansing the Daughters of Zion

This section of scripture is terribly desperate. Much has happened to the people of Israel as the judgement of God becomes evident and his hand moves them closer to exile. The “daughters of Zion” are representative of Israel herself. A transformation has happened, but not the good kind that comes from investment. This transformation is a reflection of what has been forfeited by Israel; the precious things she has walked away from.

What is being stripped away from God’s people has a great deal to do with what they have adorned themselves with. The detail the Lord goes into through Isaiah’s prophecy leaves no doubt that his heart has been broken by the waywardness of his people, yet there is a cost to their disobedience that cannot be overlooked.

The question for us is the same...Will we see our own nakedness and how will we respond? Will we turn to God for answers and will we continue to look to the world for clarity when it comes to our true identity? Will we search our hearts to discover who it is we have been called to become, or will we allow others to lead us to their truth? When will we see our brokenness and turn to God for help? When will we position ourselves for spiritual transformation?

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 3:16 The LORD says, “Beautiful Zion is haughty: craning her elegant neck, flirting with her eyes, walking with dainty steps, tinkling her ankle bracelets. ¹⁷ So the Lord will send scabs on her head; the LORD will make beautiful Zion bald.”</p> <p>¹⁸ On that day of judgment the Lord will strip away everything that makes her beautiful: ornaments, headbands, crescent necklaces, ¹⁹ earrings, bracelets, and veils; ²⁰ scarves, ankle bracelets, sashes, perfumes, and charms; ²¹ rings, jewels, ²² party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses; ²³ mirrors, fine linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls.</p>	<p>q 3:16 Metaphorically, these “daughters of Zion” could represent churches today that walk in pride, flirting with the world. In ch. 4, they lay hold of one man, Jesus Christ.</p> <p>r 3:17 The Hebrew is the name Adonai; also in v. 18.</p> <p>s 3:17 A scab would make them unclean and unable to come before God as priests (Lev. 13:2–6). Scabs are unhealed wounds. Our thoughts (foreheads) must be clean and healed from any past wounds.</p> <p>t 3:20 Or “perfume boxes” (lit. “houses of breath”).</p> <p>u 3:23 When we put our emphasis on what is outward and ignore purity within, we stand in danger of losing it all. God looks upon the heart, not the outward appearance (1 Sam. 16:7).</p>	<p>Isaiah 3:16 Here is what Yahweh says: “The daughters of Zion are proud, walking about arrogantly with their noses in the air. Their eyes are seductive as they skip along with jewelry jingling on their ankles. q ¹⁷ So the Lord r will afflict the foreheads of the daughters of Zion with scabs; s Yahweh will make the front of their heads bald in that day.”</p> <p>¹⁸⁻¹⁹ In that day, the Lord will strip away their vanity— their beautiful ankle jewelry, necklaces, crescent pendants, earrings, bracelets, and veils of shimmering gauze. ²⁰ Gone will be their elaborate headdresses and ankle chains, their sashes, sachets, t and charms. ²¹ He will snatch away their signet rings and nose rings, ²² their stately gowns, capes, shawls, cloaks, and purses, ²³ hand mirrors, fine linen garments interwoven with gold and purple, turbans, and long veils. u</p>

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>²⁴ Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, she will stink. She will wear a rope for a sash, and her elegant hair will fall out. She will wear rough burlap instead of rich robes. Shame will replace her beauty. ²⁵ The men of the city will be killed with the sword, and her warriors will die in battle. ²⁶ The gates of Zion will weep and mourn. The city will be like a ravaged woman, huddled on the ground.</p> <p>^{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.”</p>	<p>a ^{4:1} This chapter should be viewed as a continuation of ch. 3 regarding the women of Zion. The women of Zion can also be a metaphor for the churches. There is coming a day when the church will become so destitute of answers that she will turn to one man, the Lord Jesus, and take hold of him. We have taken hold of the world, and we have taken hold of clever ideas, but the “seven women” (seven churches of Rev. 2 and 3) are about to lay hold of their Beloved. The church will long for him, that he would feed us his bread and we would wear his garments. We will want to be called by his great name. The shadow of his beauty will remove our disgrace.</p>	<p>²⁴ A stench will take the place of seductive perfumes; a rope will take the place of a sash, baldness for braided hair, rags instead of a fine robe, and the brand of a captive instead of beauty. ²⁵ Your men will fall on the battlefield and your heroes will die in war. ²⁶ Cries of mourning will be heard at the city gates; with the anguish of such great loss, she will sit down and grieve in the dirt.</p> <p>^{4:1} Seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, “We will eat our own food and wear our own clothing; just take away our disgrace and let us be called by your name.” a</p>

- Adonai

- Many people who are familiar with the Old Testament names of God might be quick to answer that Adonai is one of the most common names of God in the Old Testament. This is only partially correct.
- The word Adonai is simply the word for “Lord.” Lord is defined in English as “someone or something having power, authority, or influence; a master or ruler.” In 1 Samuel 24:8, 26:17, and 29:8, David refers to Saul as “my lord the king,” and he uses the term Adonai. Likewise, Abner refers to David in the same way in 2 Samuel 3:21, and this is found throughout the book of 2 Samuel as a reference to David. The term is used of other kings as well. Some of Elisha’s followers use the term Adonai to refer to Elisha in 2 Kings 2:19. As can be seen by its usage throughout the Old Testament, Adonai is simply a term of respect that is in keeping with the English definition and usage of the word lord.
- It would be more accurate to say that Adonai is used as a description of God or as a title of respect, rather than a name in the proper sense. David would have had no problem addressing God as “Adonai” and then addressing Saul as “Adonai” as well—no one would have been confused by that, just as no one today thinks that referring to the English poet as “Lord Byron” ascribes deity to him.
- In the English Old Testament, Adonai is usually translated “Lord”; however, most occurrences of the word Lord in the English Old Testament are not translations of Adonai. God’s special covenant name, Yahweh was so holy that, in later years, many Jews feared even to say it. Even today, when they are reading the Hebrew text (which originally had only consonants) they will pronounce YHWH as “Adonai.” In keeping with this tradition, most English versions translate YHWH as “LORD” (in all caps). In general, if the English word is LORD (all capital letters), then the Hebrew word translated is YHWH; and, if the English is Lord (using lower case letters), whether referring to God or someone else, it is translating Adonai.

- Adonai is certainly an apt title for God. While there are other lords who hold sway over limited realms, God is the Lord of all the earth (Joshua 3:11).

- **Commentary: Bible Knowledge Commentary, John A. Martin**

- 3:17-4:1 In contrast with their pride, wealth, and beauty, the women of Zion (cf. 3:16) would be in deep distress. They would have sores on their heads and would be bald. This baldness may refer to their shaving their heads, either in mourning or for medical reasons, because of their head sores. Being in deep distress they would not care how they looked. In fact the LORD would cause the Babylonian soldiers to take away all the women's fine jewelry and wardrobes (vv. 19-23). Instead of fragrance they would have an awful odor (v. 24) perhaps from their head sores (v. 17). Taken captive by the Babylonians, the women would be pulled by a rope and would wear sackcloth, black coarse cloth made from goats' hair and symbolizing mourning (cf. Gen. 37:34; 1 Kings 21:27; Neh. 9:1; Es. 4:1; Isa. 15:3; 22:12; 32:11; 37:1-2; Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 27:31; Dan. 9:3). Their beauty would be replaced by painful branding by their captors. The women would mourn because their men (husbands, brothers, and male friends) would be dying in battle (Isa. 3:25). The city would be so destitute of men and the women would be so disgraced that they would compete to gain a husband (4:1). Isaiah's picture of the Jerusalem socialites and their plight might be humorous if it were not so pathetic and realistic. Years later Jeremiah wrote that the women resorted to eating their own children during the siege (Lam. 2:20; 4:10; cf. Lev. 26:27-29; Deut. 28:53-57; Jer. 19:9).

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. If it is true that the "daughters of Zion" may be a metaphor for the church, what have we adorned ourselves with that the Lord may be wanting to strip away?
2. Have you ever felt like the Lord has "stripped" you of an external thing that may have been a bit too precious to you? How did it feel? How did you respond?
3. What would it look like for the American church to be in "deep distress?" How do you think the church might respond to the Lord's compassion when he meets them in their distress?
4. Can you think of any New Testament examples of Jesus' followers being in deep distress over their circumstances? How did they respond?
5. If the cry of Chapter 4, verse 1 were heard in our nation today, "just take away our disgrace and let us be called by your name," what do you think the response from the Lord might be?