



Meditation— Isaiah 3.⁹⁻¹¹

- ⁹The shew of their countenance doth witness against them;
and they declare their sin as Sodom,
they hide it not.
Woe unto their soul!
for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.
- ¹⁰Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him:
for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.
- ¹¹Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him:
for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

Though a century and a half separated the ministries of the Hebrew prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, Israelite society, whose behavior they critiqued, was in many regards remarkably similar. Fast forward two- and a-half millennia and travel to the opposite side of the globe and we find an American society remarkably similar to those two distant Israels.

In the mid-8th century B.C., Isaiah charged Judah of being shameless. Like Sodom, the prototypical reflection of a corrupt and corrupted society, 8th century Judah, with its citizenry, was awash in sin. And like its sister Sodom, Judah's citizens made no attempt to hide their sin. Rather, they openly spoke of it, asserting that what the prophet called sin was actually appropriate and righteous. Anyone with discernment could easily witness their sinful state of mind by gazing upon the proud look on their faces.

Observing the same society 150 years later, Jeremiah asked, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?" The prophet did not wait for an answer, but immediately answered his own question: "Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush..." (Jer. 6.¹⁵). Indeed, like Isaiah before him, he saw the evidence of this shamelessness on the very faces of his people. They "refusedst to be ashamed," possessing, what Jeremiah called a "whore's forehead" (Jer. 3.³). This "whore's forehead" probably refers to some type of mark/ Tattoo that signaled that she/he was for sale, available to the highest bidder. Today's short butt-cheek high minidress worn by prostitutes on city streets might be an equivalent.

As usual, our interest in these matters is more than antiquarian. I have thought of these two prophets' observations often as I have watched 21st century American political leaders and citizens. The nation's 45th president boasted of molesting women, has proudly defrauded business partners and the federal government. He has brazenly lied about everything under the sun. Corruption and lying seem to have become the past time of the political class. Politicians lie with a straight face and with false claims of righteousness that are a marvel of theatrical skill. They refuse to acknowledge sin and present the most patently clear falsehoods as truth or "alternative facts." Even when caught, sometimes on tape and film, they will look straight into the eye of the public and claim that what the tape or film just proved is false. Never is there the slightest blush or embarrassment. Just arrogant bravado. A doubling down on sin and shamelessness. One can hardly read of the "whore's forehead" without thinking of one such as Roger

Stone with his ridiculous top hats and designer sunglasses that broadcast his shameless pride in corruption.

Millions of Americans embrace these political whores, while, in their personal lives accepting and propagating the most absurd, outlandish, irrational lies and conspiracy theories without a hint of shame. By the millions, the nation's citizens know no shame in behaving during a pandemic in ways that endanger the health and life of their fellow citizens. They shamelessly present their ignorance, narcissism, and rebellion against righteousness as noble and patriotic.

The list of shameless American thought and behavior is too long to catalogue. For, increasingly, its citizens refuse to blush at sin. They feel no shame at their wickedness. It is one thing to sin and know it and then to acknowledge it for what it is. It is a whole other ballgame to sin and refuse to know or acknowledge it. It is one thing to blush red when caught in sin, it is another to turn red-faced in adamant and shameless defense of shameful sin and wickedness.

If Isaiah and Jeremiah are to be trusted, we must be worried about America's future when we gaze upon its citizens' countenances with their obstinate stares, their brass brows, their whore's foreheads, and their stiffened necks of iron sinew (See Is. 48.⁴). How long can it be before, like Israel and Judah before it, the nation that imagines itself exceptional and indispensable suffers the consequences of its shameful misdeeds so shamelessly committed? How long can it be before no balm can heal the deep lesions of a people who shameless exult in shameful wickedness? How long before the cancer is stage four, and the patient is pronounced dead?

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: april 22, 2024)