

## “Jewelry: the Out-of-Context Plague Spreads”

By Jason Vanderlaan

Impossible! This just can't be. I mean, its one thing when an amateur takes a passage out of context and tries to prove something as laughable as God disapproving of morning people, but it's entirely different when professional theologians do something similar. I fear that this out-of-context plague is becoming an epidemic. So put on your decontamination suits... we're going in!

I've been researching the issue of jewelry recently and a disturbing trend has emerged. Four of the five books I've consulted so far (all by notable Adventist authors) cite Isaiah 3:18-23 as one of their primary proofs that Christians aren't supposed to wear jewelry. Why is this unsettling? Well, let's take a look at what it says:

“In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings and bracelets and veils, the headdresses and ankle chains 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.”

Whoa, that's a pretty hefty list! Surely there can be no argument here. God is judging the people of Judah, who are clearly being condemned for wearing jewelry (i.e. the necklaces, earrings, bracelets, etc.). But wait a second; is that what this passage is really saying?

Remember how we talked last week about being wary of ellipses? Well, this is what I call an explanatory ellipsis. Notice how certain items listed in this passage are conveniently ignored: headdresses, sashes, fine robes, cloaks, shawls, etc. These items aren't jewelry but they're still listed here. The issue must be something bigger than jewelry, unless you're willing to say God is opposed to all the items on this list and their modern equivalents (hats, scarves, broaches, hairpins, formalwear, suits and ties, etc.).

So what's really going on here? Judah is indeed being judged, but not for simply wearing jewelry. Verse 18 specifies that the Lord is taking away their “finery.” Maybe that's the key! God obviously doesn't want us to have nice things. And He clearly condemns those who want to look attractive, right? Forget torching alarm clocks – its time for a bling-burning-bonfire, oh yeah!

Eh, maybe not. Once again the issue is something bigger. You see, the women of Judah were wearing all of these things *for the purpose of exalting themselves* (see v.16-17) and attracting lovers other than their husbands. These women were examples of what the nation of Judah as a whole was doing: exalting themselves in order to seek lovers other than God. The problem was not wearing jewelry, but trying to make themselves significant in their own eyes and in the eyes of their heathen neighbors.

So now that we understand the real issue here, we are faced with a question: Where do you find your significance? Is it in jewelry? Is it in fancy suits and ties? Is it in your wealth? Your education and knowledge? Your own charm and personality? If so, you'd better think again.

There is only one way you can find meaning in life, and it isn't by impressing others with your “finery.” True significance can only be found in Christ and the realization that He gave His life for you... just you. And once you find your value in Him, He will continue to develop your life into one of significance for Him. That's all there is to it.

Well, it looks like we've got this epidemic under control... at least for now. But remember: only you can prevent the spread of the out-of-context plague!