

General Comments on Isaiah 3

Note: This chapter appears in 2 Ne. 13

The overall theme of ch. 2-5 continues in this chapter with a twofold disaster upon Israel: famine and invasion. Internal problems are brought about by wickedness, for which Lord punishing them by famine. The famine weakens the nation to the point where foreign invasion is possible.

Note the text of 3:1-3:15 is aimed at the men of Jerusalem, while 3:16-4:6 is aimed at the women of Jerusalem. There are no gender preferences in Isaiah's accusations, all are corrupt so all are indicted.

KJV Isaiah 3

1 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, 2 The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, 3 The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. 4 And I will give children [to be] their princes, and babes shall rule over them. 5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. 6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, [saying], Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and [let] this ruin [be] under thy hand: 7 In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house [is] neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. 8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings [are] against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom,

JPS Isaiah 3

For lo!
The Sovereign LORD of Hosts
Will remove from Jerusalem and from Judah
Prop and stay,
Every prop of food
And every prop of water:
²Soldier and warrior,
Magistrate and prophet,
Augur and elder;
³Captain of fifty,
Magnate and counselor,
Skilled artisan and expert enchanter;
⁴And He will make boys their rulers,
And babes shall govern them.
⁵So the people shall oppress one another—
Each oppressing his fellow:
The young shall bully the old;
And the despised [shall bully] the honored.

⁶For should a man seize his brother,
In whose father's house there is clothing:
"Come, be a chief over us,
And let this ruin be under your care,"
⁷The other will thereupon protest,
"I will not be a dresser of wounds,
With no food or clothing in my own house.
You shall not make me chief of a people!"

⁸Ah, Jerusalem has stumbled,
And Judah has fallen,
Because by word and deed
They insult the LORD,
Defying His majestic glance.
⁹Their partiality in judgment accuses them;
They avow their sins like Sodom,

they hide [it] not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. 10 Say ye to the righteous, that [it shall be] well [with him]: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. 11 Woe unto the wicked! [it shall be] ill [with him]: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. 12 [As for] my people, children [are] their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause [thee] to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. 13 The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. 14 The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor [is] in your houses. 15 What mean ye [that] ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

16 Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing [as] they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. 18 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of [their] tinkling ornaments [about their feet], and [their] cauls, and [their] round tires like the moon, 19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, 21 The rings, and nose jewels, 22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, 23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. 24 And it shall come to pass, [that] instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and

They do not conceal them.

Woe to them! For ill

Have they served themselves.

¹⁰(Hail the just man, for he shall fare well;

He shall eat the fruit of his works.

¹¹Woe to the wicked man, for he shall fare ill;

As his hands have dealt, so shall it be done to him.)

¹²My people's rulers are babes,

It is governed by women.

O my people!

Your leaders are misleaders;

They have confused the course of your paths.

¹³The LORD stands up to plead a cause,

He rises to champion peoples.

¹⁴The LORD will bring this charge

Against the elders and officers of His people:

"It is you who have ravaged the vineyard;

That which was robbed from the poor is in your houses.

¹⁵How dare you crush My people

And grind the faces of the poor?"

—says my Lord GOD of Hosts.

¹⁶The LORD said:

"Because the daughters of Zion

Are so vain

And walk with heads thrown back,

With roving eyes,

And with mincing gait,

Making a tinkling with their feet"—

¹⁷My Lord will bare the pates

Of the daughters of Zion,

The LORD will uncover their heads.

¹⁸In that day, my LORD will strip off the finery of the anklets, the fillets, and the crescents; ¹⁹of the eardrops, the bracelets, and the veils; ²⁰the turbans, the armlets, and the sashes; of the talismans and the amulets; ²¹the signet rings and the nose rings; ²²of the festive robes, the mantles, and the shawls; the purses, ²³the lace gowns, and the linen vests; and the kerchiefs and the capes.

²⁴And then—

Instead of perfume, there shall be rot;

And instead of an apron, a rope;

Instead of a diadem of beaten-work,

A shorn head;

Instead of a rich robe,

A girding of sackcloth;

instead of a stomacher a girding
of sackcloth; [and] burning
instead of beauty. 25 Thy men
shall fall by the sword, and thy
mighty in the war. 26 And her
gates shall lament and mourn;
and she [being] desolate shall
sit upon the ground.

A burn instead of beauty.

²⁵Her men shall fall by the sword,
Her fighting manhood in battle;

²⁶And her gates shall lament and mourn,
And she shall be emptied,
Shall sit on the ground.

Specific Comments on Isaiah 3

The text for chapters 3 and 4 are connected in subject, and are best addressed together. The text can be arranged as follows:

- A - (v. 1) Covenant curse - famine
 - B - (v. 2-3) Religious and secular leaders alike
 - C - (v. 4-5) Lack of leadership and social strife
 - D - (v. 6-7) Covenant curse - no deliverer in Israel
 - E - (v. 8a) Jerusalem has fallen
 - E - (v. 8b) Judah has stumbled
 - D - (v. 8c-11) They spurn God and His Law
 - C - (v. 12) The leaders are misleaders
 - B - (v. 13-14) Elders and officers have ravaged the vineyard
- A - (v. 15) Leaders grind Israel underfoot

- A - (v. 16) The pride and vanity of worldly Israel
 - B - (v. 17-23) Mammon idolatry stripped from Israel
 - C - (v. 24) Burning shame replaces beauty
 - D - (v. 25-26) Widowed and in squalor
 - E - (v. 1) Destitute and childless
- A - (v. 2) Dignity and majesty granted by the Lord to remnant
 - B - (v. 3) Remnant called holy
 - C - (v. 4) Filth washed away in spirit of "burning"
 - D - (v. 5) Founded and protected
 - E - (v. 6) Wedding pavilion established

1 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, 2 The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, 3 The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

v1-3 The strong and wise men of Israel will be made weak and foolish simply by taking their bread and water away. Thus, their dependance upon Providence is exposed.

v1 A classic covenant curse designed to get people to repent, cp. Lev. 26:20.

v2-3 As wickedness in the society is pervasive, the punishment will be universal.

4 And I will give children [to be] their princes, and babes shall rule over them. 5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.

6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, [saying], Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and [let] this ruin [be] under thy hand: 7 In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house [is] neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people.

8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings [are] against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory. 9 The 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.

v4 "children...babes", probably a reference to the rulers of Israel being adult males who are juvenile in actions, rather than literal children and babies.

v5 A general breakdown of society because all are disregarding the Law of Moses, compare 1:16-17.

v6-7 No deliverer in Israel, ct. Judges 2:16. During Israel's early history many righteous individuals were raised up to lead them out of bondage and into righteousness, e.g. Gideon. But, on the day of Israel's collapse, no deliverer will be found. Also, the Lord has disposed of their unrighteous rulers, leaving them leaderless, cp. Hosea 3:4, Hosea 13:9-11.

v6 The BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

When a man shall
take hold of his brother
of the house of his father,
[saying], Thou hast clothing,
be thou our ruler,
and [let] this ruin
[be] under thy hand:

BofM

When a man shall
take hold of his brother
of the house of his father,
and shall say: Thou hast clothing,
be thou our ruler,
and let not this ruin
come under thy hand--

v7 On the lack of food and clothing see v. 1, and a similar statement is made by the women in 4:1. Contrast this with 52:1, 55:1, 61:10.

"dresser of wounds", invoking the covenant curse referred to in 1:5-6. The individual is stating that he will not/cannot help them.

v9 They take pride in their ability to flaunt their sins in public without fear. Their society tolerates and embraces sin.

"as Sodom", cp. 1:9-10.

10 Say ye to the righteous, that [it shall be] well [with him]: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. 11 Woe unto the wicked! [it shall be] ill [with him]: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

v10-11 A covenant blessing, cp. 1:19, 7:21, 62:9, 65:21. The righteous are spared while the wicked suffer calamity.

v11 The BofM differs from the KJV:

KJV

Woe unto the wicked!
it shall be ill with him:
for the reward of his hands
shall be given him.

BofM

Wo unto the wicked,
for they shall perish;
for the reward of their hands
shall be upon them!

12 [As for] my people, children [are] their oppressors, and women rule over them. 0 my people, they which lead thee cause [thee] to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. 13 The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. 14 The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor [is] in your houses. 15 What mean ye [that] ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

v12 The leaders of Israel are juvenile, effeminate men. The leaders are corrupt and in turn corrupt what they lead.

The verse may also imply a breakdown of patriarchal society and a loss of respect for the Priesthood's role in governing, but such a reading would be not be in context with the statement that the leaders are misleading.

v15 "vineyard", Israel is symbolically a vineyard, cp. ch. 5.

16 Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing [as] they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

18 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of [their] tinkling ornaments [about their feet], and [their] cauls, and [their] round tires like the moon, 19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings,

21 The rings, and nose jewels, 22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, 23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. 24 And it shall come to pass, [that] instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; [and] burning instead of beauty. 25 Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. 26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she [being] desolate shall sit upon the ground.

v16-24 Israel is frequently called a "she" (cp. 1:21, 54:1-8), but this passage is referring specifically to literal females of Israel as v. 12-15 is referring to the literal males of Israel.

When the women of Israel are led into sin by the men, the women are not at fault. Compare Hosea's similar pattern of indictment (cf. Hosea 4:12-14) where the males are chastised and then the females are chastised to the discredit of the male leadership. Of course, if women seek out sin on their own they are culpable, as this in no way releases women entirely from any responsibility. It simply shows where the responsibilities are placed. The men ought to exercise the Priesthood to sanctify Israel.

v18-23 Compare Exod. 32:2 and Hosea 2:13 where various ornaments are associated with idolatry. See also Exod. 33:3-6 where the Lord instructs Israel to remove their ornaments.

v24-26 Compare Lev. 26:39-47.

v24 As a result of their materialistic idolatry, they will be deprived of their wealth and be forced into humility.

v25-26 Israel shall be humbled by a conquering invader, cp. 5:26-30, 10:3-11.

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