

Session 5

Removal of Leaders and Social Disorder in Jerusalem and Judah

Isaiah Oracle by Oracle / Dr. Randy White

Isaiah 3:1-26

Session Purpose

To show how the Lord judges Jerusalem and Judah by removing their supports, exposing corrupt leadership, and humbling the pride of Zion.

The Lord Takes Away the Stay and Staff from Jerusalem and Judah (vv.1–3)

- The Lord is going to remove “the stay and the staff” (v. 1).
 - Two words of the same root, literally “the support and the support-thing.”
 - The first use of “stay” is 1 Kings 10:19.
- The text gets more specific with what is going to be removed:
 - Food and water (v. 1)
 - The mighty man (v. 2)
 - The man of war (v. 2)
 - The judge (v. 2)
 - The prophet (v. 2)
 - The prudent (v. 2)
 - The ancient (v. 2)
 - The captain of fifty (v. 3)
 - The honourable man (v. 3)
 - The counsellor (v. 3)
 - The cunning artificer (v. 3)
 - The eloquent orator (v. 3)
- In short, the physical, social, governmental, and spiritual support systems of Jerusalem and Judah will be removed.

Children and Babes Rule, Causing Oppression and Pride (vv.4–7)

- Part of the Lord’s punishment would be that the “real men” were all taken away (vv. 2–3), and “children” were put in their place (v. 4).
 - Under Torah, leadership was given to competent, respected men of experience (Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:13).
 - Since the nation had rejected Torah observance, God said He would punish them

with children to be their rulers.

* Since the text uses “children” and “babes,” it is largely talking metaphorically.

* Dispensational note: it is important not to conclude that immature leadership is a sign of God’s judgment on a nation. This warning is for “Jerusalem and Judah” (v. 1) and should not be applied universally.

* An example (of many) in which this passage is applied to our time and place.¹

*When God wants to bless,
He gives a nation strong,
God-fearing leaders. When He
wants to remove His blessing,*

God lets children and spiritually immature leaders take positions of authority. This is one way God can call a nation back to him. A nation is not a section of land; it is people. I believe we live in a day where God is calling people back to Him.

- The results of the immature leadership would be disastrous (v. 5).
- Things will get so bad that anyone with clothes left will be begged to be the ruler, and the plea, “let this ruin be under thy hand” (v. 6).
- The only guy with a suit to wear will refuse to be king because he is consumed with the need to feed his family (v. 7).

Jerusalem and Judah Ruined Because of Their Tongue and Doings (vv.8–11)

- Isaiah backs up from the future judgment to the current situation that merits that judgment.
 - A clear reason for the judgment: “their tongue and their doings are against the LORD” (v. 8)
 - They are as bold in sin as Sodom, “they hide it not” (v. 9)
- The righteous man is to be comforted, “that it shall be well with him.” The unrighteous, however, “shall eat the fruit of their doings” (v. 10).
 - Note that “righteous” is singular, but likely “singular collective,” a Hebrew figure of speech in which one representative stands for the whole. However, one should

consider whether it is, in reality, a collection represented in singular speech or a single individual and no figure of speech at all.

- Since this is a futurist passage and potentially could apply during the last days, it is worthy of consideration whether this is in reference to the Messiah.
- The wicked man (also singular) will receive punishment, “for the reward of his hands shall be given him” (v. 11).
 - Again, this is likely a singular collective figure of speech, but consideration should be made for a literal interpretation.
 - If interpreted literally, who is this *wicked one*? Could it be a reference to the antichrist of the last days?

¹Christ in Prophecy Blog, “I Will Make Children Rule Over Them,” https://christinprophecyblog.org/2024/08/i-will-make-children-rule-over-them/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (accessed 4.2.26).

The Lord Stands to Judge the People and Their Leaders (vv.12–15)

- A courtroom scene begins with verse 12, with judgment coming from the Lord. The voice of verse 12 is that of Isaiah, who has been the spokesperson from v. 1. Thus, “my people” is the kinsmen of Isaiah.
- It begins with a summary analysis: “children are their oppressors, and women rule over them” (v. 12).
 - This is a result of the punishment brought by the Lord in vv. 2–3.
 - A lack of strong men has led to rule by children and women.
 - The leadership is charged as being the problem: “they which lead *thee* cause thee to err” (v. 12)
- The Lord stands (v. 13) and His contention seems to be that those who *should* have been leading (“the ancients of thy people, and the princes thereof” (v. 14)) had allowed this situation to take place. These are the very ones that *should* have protected Israel from the harm she is experiencing from inexperienced and self-serving leadership.
 - Those who should have been leaders have simply gotten rich off the people and taken advantage of the poor (v. 14–15).

The Daughters of Zion’s Haughtiness and the Removal of Their Ornaments (vv.16–24)

- A note about vv. 16–24:
 - Women are normally treated with great respect in Scripture.
 - From time to time, however, prophets move to a ruthless account of the women of Israel and Judah.
 - When prophets go after women like this, it usually signals a society so degraded that even its social norms and roles are inverted or corrupted.
 - These accounts are a condemnation of the society as a whole more than simply the women.
 - When that which is beautiful becomes ugly, then there is nothing but the ugly left.
- The Lord now turns His attention to “the daughters of Zion,” exposing their pride and vanity (v. 16).
 - They are described as haughty, seductive, and self-display oriented in the way they walk, look, and carry themselves (v. 16).
- Because of this pride, the Lord will smite and shame them rather than honor them (v. 17).
 - The outward beauty they cultivated will be touched by divine judgment (v. 17).
- Isaiah then gives an extended list of the ornaments, clothing, and luxury items that the Lord will take away (vv. 18–23).
 - The judgment reaches every layer of adornment, from jewelry and headdresses to robes, purses, and mirrors (vv. 18–23).
 - Note that many of these words are, in English and Hebrew, found only here or seldom in the text; thus, translations vary widely.
 - In v. 18, the “round tires like the moon” are likely crescent-shaped ornaments or pendants.
 - In v. 19, the “mufflers” are not modern winter scarves, but veils or shawls worn over the face or upper body.
 - In v. 20, the “bonnets” are headdresses or ornamental turbans.
 - In v. 20, the “ornaments of the legs” are ankle chains or step-chains that linked the feet with a tinkling sound.

- In v. 20, the “headbands” are sashes or girdles.
- In v. 20, the “tablets” in 1611 English are likely scent boxes or perfume containers, not writing tablets.
- In v. 20, the “earrings” may refer to whispering charms or amulets, something worn as ornament and perhaps superstitious protection.
- In v. 21, the “nose jewels” are nose rings.
- In v. 22, the “changeable suits of apparel” are festive outer garments or expensive changes of clothing.
- In v. 22, the “mantles” are flowing cloaks.
- In v. 22, the “wimples” are wide shawls, wraps, or veils.
- In v. 22, the “crisping pins” are purses or small bags; the Hebrew likely points to money bags rather than hairpins.
- In v. 23, the “glasses” are mirrors, probably polished metal mirrors.
- In v. 23, the “fine linen” points to costly undergarments or tunics made of linen.
- In v. 23, the “hoods” are veils or head coverings.
- In v. 23, the “vails” are larger wraps or mantles used as an outer covering.
- The final result is a series of humiliating reversals (v. 24).
 - Sweet smell becomes stink, beauty gives way to baldness, rich attire to sackcloth, and attractiveness to burning and shame (v. 24).
- These “daughters of Zion” represent, in essence, the nation itself. It stands in contrast to the Proverbs 31 woman, which depicts Israel in her beauty.

Men Fall by the Sword and the City’s Gates Lament (vv.25–26)

- The result, when Israel is the “ugly woman” rather than the “woman that feareth the Lord” (Prov. 31:30), is devastation of the strength of the nation, as depicted in verses 2–3; thus, the chapter makes a full circle.
- When this happens, the lofty gates of Jerusalem “shall lament and mourn” (v. 25). Contrast this with the strong and honored gates of Jerusalem in Psalm 147:13, where God “hath strengthened the bars of thy gates,” and Isaiah 60:18, where Zion’s gates are called “Praise.”