

Continued Denunciation for Rebellion Against the Lord Isaiah 3

Isaiah 3:1-9 - “For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stock and the store, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water;² the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, and the diviner and the elder;³ the captain of fifty and the honorable man, the counselor and the skillful artisan, and the expert enchanter. ⁴ “I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. ⁵ The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable.”⁶ When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, “You have clothing; you be our ruler, and let these ruins be under your power,”⁷ in that day he will protest, saying, “I cannot cure your ills, for in my house is neither food nor clothing. Do not make me a ruler of the people.”⁸ For Jerusalem stumbled, and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His glory.”

Background Notes

In our study of Isaiah 2, we read about the coming “Day of the Lord” in verse 12. The Day of the Lord is mentioned a number of times throughout the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. We have already discussed the fact that, in general, the term “**Day of the Lord**” can be used in the Old Testament for “**any time that the Lord intervenes in the affairs of nations. – either for blessing or for judgment.**” In the case of Isaiah 2 the Day of the Lord would intervene for judgment. We also mentioned that there is both a *historical* or *past* aspect to the day of the Lord and an *eschatological* or *future* aspect to the Day of the Lord.

The judgment of the Day of the Lord in Isaiah 2 is primarily **eschatological** - in other words, what was primarily in view in chapter 2 is the *future* judgment of the Tribulation period that will come upon the **entire earth**: “when He arises to shake the earth mightily” (2:19); and “when He arises to shake the earth mightily” (2:21).

In chapter 3, the theme of judgment of the Day of the Lord continued, but in Isaiah 3 the *historical* aspect of the Day of the Lord is primarily in view - specifically, the 6th century BC, when the Lord allowed the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar to sweep in and conquer Judah and Jerusalem because of the nation’s rebellion against the Lord.

An important point to remember for properly interpreting Old Testament prophecy is this: the Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah, are known for moving back and forth between the historical and the eschatological - between the near future fulfillment of prophecy and the far future fulfillment of prophecy. In Isaiah 3 the near future fulfillment of prophecy was in view. Already the threat of invasion by the Assyrians was at the doorstep for the sinful northern kingdom of Israel, and the coming invasion of the Babylonians was not far down the road for the rebellious people of Judah. In Isaiah 3 we

see how rebellion against the Lord affects all of society. The consequences of rebellion that were seen Isaiah's day will also be the result of rebellion in the future day of the Lord - and they certainly can be applied in our own day, as we'll see.

Doctrinal Points

1. When people rebel against the Lord, there will be a breakdown of society.

Verses 1-8 predicted the complete societal breakdown that would occur when God allowed the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar to sweep in and besiege Jerusalem. The normal food and water supplies would be cut off (v1), the nation's defenses would be decimated (v2), the civil courts would no longer be operational (v2), the religious leaders would be removed (v2), the military commanders would be gone (v3), and the skilled workers and craftsmen would be out of business (v3).

The fact that the "diviners" or "enchanters" were included in Isaiah's list does not mean that Isaiah condoned these practices as a good and normal part of society, like the other things he listed. No! He was emphasizing that all the people and all the things that the nation (wrongly) depended on for their security would be removed.

The normal functioning of society would disappear. People who were as inexperienced and helpless as children would be in leadership positions (v4). There would be oppression and anarchy and disrespect for authority (v5). People would grab anyone who looked even slightly successful, and try to set up some sort of local government - but no one would be willing to take on such responsibilities (v7-8).

Complete chaos and devastation would be the result. Why? Isaiah gave the bottom line reason in verse 8: "*For Jerusalem stumbled, and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord.*" When people rebel against the Lord and the standards of His Word, society breaks down.

Does this description of the breakdown of society sound familiar? Just look around at our nation and our society! This is the direction our own nation is heading – disrespect of authority, corruption in the courts, dysfunctional families, departure from biblical standards (even in the church!), and loss of moral leadership.

When people rebel against the Lord, society breaks down!

2. When people rebel against the Lord, there will be a judgment of society.

Isaiah 3:9-15 - "*The look on their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom. They do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.* ¹⁰ *Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.* ¹¹ *Woe to 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! Those*

who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.”¹³ The Lord stands up to plead, and stands to judge the people. ¹⁴ The Lord will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and His princes: “For you have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. ¹⁵ What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the faces of the poor?” says the Lord God of hosts.”

God would have to judge His people because of their rebellion. In verses 9 and 11 two “woes” were pronounced upon Judah and Jerusalem. The people would have to reap what they had sown.

Notice - their sins were not just idolatry and immorality (as in the case of Sodom v 9), but also the social sins of crushing the poor and needy (v14-15). Again, all of this applies to our own country today. Our nation is certainly guilty of the same sexual and social sins - and God will judge our society as a result.

Verse 10 sounds a note of hope between the two “woes” of judgment: *“Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.”* Just as the wicked will reap what they sow, so will the righteous reap what they sow.

Verse 12 is not a “put-down” on women! It’s simply a description of the consequences that would prevail with the removal of male leadership after the Babylonians conquered Judah. Women (who in that day were not prepared for leadership roles) would rule over the people who were left, because the male population had been decimated.

The Lord’s judgment would especially fall upon the leaders who had led His people astray (v14). Anyone in a position of church leadership today who leads people astray, or hurts them in some way, will be judged! I know a man who, because of his pride and his ruthless assumption of authority, almost single-handedly destroyed a young and promising local church. I would not want to be in his shoes at the judgment seat of Christ.

Any kind of rebellion against the Lord’s authority at any level must be judged. When people rebel against the Lord, God will judge that society.

3. When people rebel against the Lord, there will be a humbling of society.

Isaiah 3:16-26 - *“Moreover the Lord says: “Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes; walking and mincing as they go, making a jingling with their feet,¹⁷ therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will uncover their secret parts.¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away their finery - the jingling anklets, the scarves, the crescents,¹⁹ the pendants, the bracelets, and the veils;²⁰ the headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; the perfume boxes, the charms,²¹ and the rings; the nose jewels,²² the festal apparel, and the mantles; the outer garments, the purses,²³ and the mirrors; the fine linen, the turbans, and the robes.²⁴ And so it shall be: Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.²⁵ Your*

men shall fall by the sword and your mighty in the war. ²⁶ Her gates shall lament and mourn, and she being desolate shall sit on the ground."

When the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 587 BC, all the conditions described here literally took place. The siege of Jerusalem lasted over a year, and there was a great humbling of society. The fashionable women, with their luxurious wardrobes, expensive jewelry, their seductive clothing and their alluring ways of walking around the city, would be humbled as they were stripped of their wealth, and even their clothing, and became destitute.

During the time of siege, people would develop skin diseases and their hair would fall out as they gradually starved to death. We know from Jeremiah and Lamentations that some people even stooped to the practice of cannibalism. Jerusalem's citizens would be killed, or die of starvation, or would be taken away as captives to Babylon.

Verse 24 is a literal description of the humbling conditions of the society as the captives were being led away from Jerusalem to Babylon: *And so it shall be: instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.* It's pretty hard to remain proud under those conditions.

When people rebel against the Lord, their society will be humbled.

Practical Application

Let's humble ourselves - or be humbled!

Our third doctrinal point certainly has a personal application. If we rebel against the Lord, we **will** be humbled. If we don't humble ourselves, ***the Lord must humble us!***

Listen to the familiar words of 1 Peter 5:5-6, "*Submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'* Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

Do you want to be exalted? Here's a promise from God's Word (and no exceptions were given!): ***Humble yourself, and God will exalt you in due time!*** But remember - the converse is also true. Exalt yourself and God will humble you.

Let's humble ourselves - or be humbled!