



Isaiah 3:1-15

When God Rises to Judge (1-12) and The Judge in His Courtroom (13-15)

It has been clear through the first two chapters of Isaiah that God is not pleased with Israel and is now going to respond to their rebellion. He has presented his case and is now bringing some clarity to how their rebellion has impacted the covenant relationship he has with Israel.

The way the Lord goes about his communication with the leaders of Judah is full of twist and turns. God is communicating his heart to Isaiah to paint a picture that is very important to him. He could have easily shared their trespasses with them and doled out the punishment, but he takes it a step further and spells the details out with them in a way that leaves no room for negotiation.

The last three verses bring into view a legal perspective, building a solid case against God's people. Here we find testimony against Israel that is blunt and to the point. It's like they are being cross-examined by one of the most powerful prosecuting attorneys in the land. As a matter of fact, they are!

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 3:1 For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and supply, all support of bread, and all support of water; ² the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, ³ the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the skillful magician and the expert in charms. ⁴ And I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them. ⁵ And the people will oppress one another, every one his fellow and every one his neighbor; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the despised to the honorable. ⁶ For a man will take hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying: "You have a cloak; you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule"; ⁷ in that day he will speak out, saying: "I will not be a healer; in my house there is neither bread nor cloak; you shall not make me leader of the people."</p>	<p>a 3:1 "Support and security" is a play on words similar to "bag and baggage" or "house and home." b 3:3 Or "the ones lifted up with respect to their faces"; that is, their respected elite. c 3:3 See 2 Kings 24:14. The Hebrew word charashim is a homonym that can be translated either "skilled craftsmen" or "magicians." d 3:3 Or "eloquent orators, clever enchanters, intelligentsia" (LXX). e 3:4 Or "mockers" (LXX). f 3:7 Or "I will not be a healer" or "I will not be your leader" (LXX). g 3:7 Ignoring leadership is the definition of anarchy. As they ignore the one who is our true leader, they are left with those who have no remedy. The righteous King has a cloak of righteousness to give them if they would only turn to him.</p>	<p>Isaiah 3:1 Behold—Yahweh, the Sovereign One, the Commander of Angel Armies, is about to cut off from Jerusalem and Judah every source of their support and security, a including all food supplies and water. ² He will remove their heroes and soldiers, prophets and judges, their fortune-tellers and statesmen, ³ their respected military leaders, pillars of the community, b their counselors, skilled craftsmen, c and those professional charmers. d ⁴ I will make inexperienced youth their rulers, and children e will govern them. ⁵ Everyone will take advantage of everyone else, and neighbor will struggle against neighbor. The youth will not respect their elders, and the dishonorable will sneer at those worthy of honor. ⁶ One man will even seize a relative right in his father's house and say, "At least you own a coat; you be our leader! You can oversee this heap of ruins!" ⁷ In that day he will cry out, "I have no remedy for this mess! f I don't have any food or clothes either, so don't make me your leader!" g</p>

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>⁸ For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence. ⁹ For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves ¹⁰ Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. ¹¹ Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him. ¹² My people - infants are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, your guides mislead you and they have swallowed up the course of your paths.</p> <p>¹³ The LORD has taken his place to contend; he stands to judge peoples. ¹⁴ The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. ¹⁵ What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" declares the Lord GOD of hosts.</p>	<p>h 3:8 Or "provoking the glance of his glorious eyes" (see Hab. 1:13). Sin provokes the glorious eyes of God. This is the opposite of finding favor in his eyes.</p> <p>i 3:9 See Jer. 3:3.</p> <p>j 3:10 The lovers of God, even in a time of difficulty, can enjoy the sweet fruits of seeking God and serving his kingdom. They will reap the good seeds they planted, for seeds turn into fruit. The fruit of their deeds is the holy confidence that God is with them, even in a season of judgment. We can know it will go well with us, for the message of hope is this: "Tell the righteous they can still be joyful and it will be well with them."</p> <p>k 3:11 Isaiah uses the phrase "woe to the guilty" twenty-two times. (One time he used it about himself.)</p> <p>l 3:12 Or "women."</p> <p>m 3:12 As translated from the Septuagint. The Hebrew appears to read "My people, his oppressors he deals with severely, and women rule over them. My people, your guides oppress you and confuse (a homonym for "swallow up") the way of your paths." It is difficult to understand the correct meaning of the text, and it is debated among scholars.</p> <p>n 3:14 Or "the vineyard," which is a metaphor for God's vineyard, the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, God's vineyard is the church, the source of joy and blessing to the nations. To be leaders in God's kingdom means being examples of purity, avoiding every form of corruption.</p> <p>o 3:15 Or "by grinding the faces of the poor." See Prov. 22:22-23.</p>	<p>⁸ Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen because their words and their works are defiant before the face of the Lord's glorious presence. h ⁹ The look on their impudent faces says it all, for they publicly flaunt their sin like Sodom, not even trying to hide it. i Woe to their souls, for they invite disaster upon themselves. ¹⁰ Yet reassure the righteous; it will go well with them! They will fully enjoy the reward of their deeds. j ¹¹ But woe to the guilty, k for they will get fully what they deserve! ¹² My people, mockers exploit you and creditors l rule over you. My people, your leaders mislead you and confuse you with their guidance. m</p> <p>¹³ Yahweh is taking his rightful place in court; he is rising to judge his people. ¹⁴ Yahweh comes to issue the guilty verdict of the elders and leaders of his people, saying: "You are the ones who have ruined the nation! n Your houses are full of what you've stolen from the poor! ¹⁵ What gives you the right to crush my people by shoving the faces of the poor into the dirt?" o Yahweh, the Sovereign One, Commander of Angel Armies, has spoken.</p>

- **Commentary: Bible Knowledge Commentary, John A. Martin**

- 3:1-7. God would take away from ... Judah any semblance of good government and replace it with a sense of futility. Because of her sin the LORD would take away all the supplies and people on which she relied: food and water (v. 1), soldiers (v. 2), civil (judge) and religious (prophet) leaders (v. 2), wise people (v. 2), military leaders (v. 3a), and skilled workers (v. 3b). The fact that Isaiah included the soothsayer (v. 2) [Vol. 1, p. 1040] and the clever enchanter (v. 3) in this list does not mean he was endorsing them. He was merely noting those on whom the nation was depending for survival and security. The Mosaic Covenant prohibited involvement in soothsaying and enchanting (Deut. 18:10-14). Isaiah himself wrote about Babylon trusting in this kind of activity (Isa. 47:12). In contrast with these people who were considered wise and mighty the Lord would raise up foolish, weak leadership. Inexperienced boys and children (3:4; cf. Ecc. 10:16, NIV marg.) would be unable to stop oppression and conflict (Isa. 3:5). Anybody who could be grabbed would be placed in charge of the people, his only qualification (v. 6) being that he owned a cloak. But the only thing over which he would rule anyway would be a heap of ruins. The leaders would have no solution to the problem shortages the people would face (v. 7). Isaiah was speaking of the coming devastation of Judah by the Babylonian army.

- 3:8-9. The reason such destruction would come on Judah (v. 1) is that everything the nation said and did was against her covenant God. The people defied God and were open about their sin much like the people of Sodom (cf. Gen. 18:20; 19:1-11; see comments on Isa. 1:9-10). Therefore the coming disaster was brought on by themselves. Woe is an interjection of distress or of a threat voiced in the face of present or coming disaster. Isaiah's book includes 22 occurrences of that word or its companion word, more than in any other prophetic book.
- 3:10-12. When God judges, the righteous need not fear; they will be justly rewarded for their deeds. But the wicked will be recompensed (paid back) for ... their deeds (cf. comments on Rom. 3:7-11). God's judgment is always fair. Wicked people often think that sinful living is the way to get ahead in life. Isaiah noted, however, that it is far better for a person to live righteously. The leaders (guides) were turning the nation away from the proper path (Isa. 3:12). Youths may refer to minors in age or to adults who were naive like the young. The reference to women may mean that wives were influencing their husbands who were rulers, or that the male leaders lacked vigor.
- 3:13-15. Isaiah pictured the LORD seated in a courtroom ready to judge the people and especially the leaders. By stating that He rises to judge Isaiah meant that God, having the authority to judge, was about to do so. Two charges were leveled against the leaders. The first is that they had ruined God's vineyard (v. 14), that is, God's people (5:1, 7; cf. Ps. 80:8-18; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 15:6-8; Hosea 10:1). Like husbandmen caring for a vineyard, the leaders were to care for the people. But they had ruined the people by oppressing (crushing, Isa. 3:15a) them. The second charge is that they had taken advantage of the poor (vv. 14b, 15b) by plundering them (stealing what little they had) and grinding their faces. This violated the commands in the Book of Deuteronomy not to oppress others, especially widows, orphans, and the poor. Concern for the poor is also encouraged and illustrated in the New Testament (Acts 9:36; 10:4, 31; 24:17; James 1:27; 2:1-9). A materialistic, oppressive spirit was symptomatic of the leaders' self-centeredness. Rather than seeing their leadership positions as service opportunities they saw them as means of making money at the expense of others.

- Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever felt like the Lord actually took something away from you? Whether you have or haven't, what is it about his character that causes you to believe he might respond this way?
2. When we do have something taken from us as a society (money, privilege, freedom, etc.), we often react with disbelief and confusion. What is it about the human condition that makes us think we actually deserve the thing we're asking for?
3. Do you think we (the American church) have a covenantal relationship with God? What exactly is the covenant that the people of God today operate under?
4. The leaders in verse 12 were leading people away from the path of righteousness. How might our contemporary culture in the US be being led away from righteousness by their leaders?

5. In the courtroom scene in vs. 12-15, God comes down pretty hard on those who are equally as hard on the poor. Do you feel like you, personally, can be hard on the poor at times? Explain.