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## Isaiah 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Isaiah 3.

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### Topics.

- God is taking Jerusalem's supply, mighty men and the prophet away.
- I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them.
- In that day Jerusalem's and Judah's leader will rule over ruins.
- The righteous will eat the fruit of their deeds as will the wicked.
- Women rule over my people, elders and princes devour my vineyard.
- The daughters of Zion are haughty and walk tinkling with their feet.
- Your mighty men will fall in battle and the city gates will lament.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

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Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster. Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it:

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

**The practical application:** of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

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### ISAIAH 3:1-3

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#### **God is taking Jerusalem's Supply, Mighty Men and Prophet Away.**

- **Isaiah 3:1-3:** For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and supply (the stay and the staff in KJV), all support of bread, and all support of water; <sup>2</sup>the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, <sup>3</sup>the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counsellor and the skilful magician and the expert in charms.

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The word, "behold" in this context carries the idea of looking upon what follows as if it were certain and already accomplished. The present tense is used for the future, because of the certainty of what is to come upon the people of Judah in the country and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the preceding chapter Isaiah declared in general terms, the terror of the Day of the LORD. In this chapter the focus' is on a more detailed explication of what he had spoken.

The force of this prophecy is fully seen when chapter two and three are read together. In the close of the previous chapter (Isa. 2:22) Isaiah warned the people of Judah against trusting in man. Here we see one of the reasons for this: God will soon take away their mighty men their captain and his soldiers, the judge, the prophet, the diviner, their elders and their magicians and counsellors. Often the prophecy of Isaiah pictures God's wrath being poured out like a storm bursting over the whole land and at other times the focus turns to the Holy City of Jerusalem itself.

The focus of this chapter is the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

**The LORD is taking away:** the expression, "The LORD is taking away support and supply (the stay and the staff in KJV), of bread and water," (v1) primarily carries the idea that He is taking away their two chief supports of life, firstly their food (i.e., bread and water) and secondly their principal men and women spoken of in the following verses. However, it is not limited to these, but embraces all that they looked to for support, help and relief and all things they valued and treasured. God used the Empire of Babylon to bring about this judgment at a time when bread and water were both very scarce as the following verses show:

- The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought: <sup>2</sup>"Judah mourns and her gates languish; her people lament on the ground, and the cry of Jerusalem goes up. <sup>3</sup>Her nobles send their servants for water; they come to the cisterns; they find no water; they return with their vessels empty; they are ashamed and confounded and cover their heads. <sup>4</sup>Because of the ground that is dismayed, since there is no rain on the land, the farmers are ashamed; they cover their heads. <sup>5</sup>Even the doe in the field forsakes her newborn fawn because there is no grass. <sup>6</sup>The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights; they pant for air like jackals; their eyes fail because there is no vegetation. (Jer. 14:1-6).
- So, King Zedekiah gave orders, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guard. And a loaf of bread was given him daily from the bakers' street, until all the bread of the city was gone. (Jer. 37:21).
- My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they did to Jeremiah the prophet by casting him into the cistern, and he will die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city." (Jer. 38:9).

The city and the land were to be made desolate, because their words and works had been rebellious against the LORD even at his holy temple. God is about to take away their luxuries and reduce them to absolute want. This often occurred in the sieges and wars of the nation and in the famines, which were the consequence of the wars.

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### ISAIAH 3:4-5

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#### **I will make Boys their Princes, and Infants shall Rule over Them.**

- **Isaiah 3:4-5:** And I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them. <sup>5</sup>And the people will oppress one another, everyone his fellow and everyone his neighbor; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the despised to the honorable.

The King James Bible says:

- **Isaiah 3:4-5:** And I will give children *to be* their princes, and babes shall rule over them. <sup>5</sup>And the people shall be oppressed, everyone by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.

**I will give youths (children in KJV) to be their princes:** (v4) when all the principal men and women previously spoken of are removed the word youths can refer to the following two groups of people:

1. Extremely young in age such as Ahaz who was king at twenty (2 Chron. 28:1), Manasseh who was king at twelve (2 Chron. 33:1) and Josiah who was king at eight (2 Chron. 34:1) etc. To have rash youthful boys, without experience, guided by counsellors like themselves was by the wise and anyone with a sane mind naturally regarded as great foolishness.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, it is written:

- Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning! (Eccles. 10:16).
2. Not youthful in respect to age, but in regard to wisdom, knowledge and ability for governing over a nation. Men who were inexperienced, weak and lacking in understanding, imbecile kings and equally foolish princes and rulers, this would naturally occur when the wise and great were removed. Whether the prophecy, "I will give youths to be their princes," (v4) refers literally to the young or to those who lack experience matters little since both lack the wisdom to govern a nation. It was fully accomplished in the succession of weak and wicked princes that succeeded Isaiah, until the time of Zedekiah, the last of them, when the city of Jerusalem was burned and the temple was taken by King Nebuchadnezzar.

**In that Day Jerusalem's and Judah's Leader will Rule over Ruins.**

- **Isaiah 3:6-9:** 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"; <sup>7</sup>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." <sup>8</sup>For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence. <sup>9</sup>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.

The picture presented in these prophetic verses is that no man can be found who is willing to rule over the people of Jerusalem and Judah for the following two reasons:

- 1 The city of Jerusalem has been brought ruin, the farmland land of Judah is laying in great waste, the people are facing starvation and there is an enormous lack of clothing. The conditions are so bad that those who are asked to rule the people and heal the land say, "No way, I am not ruling over this pile of rubble and ruin."
- 2 The people themselves are corrupt in their speech, actions and behaviour and instead of the priests being a blessing to the temple of God they disrespect and profane His glorious presence. Their sins are so great that those who are asked to rule the people say, "No way, I am not ruling over this rebellious and stubborn nation."

**They proclaim their sin like Sodom:** carries the idea that the kings, priests, rulers, officials and the people openly practise their shameful lifestyle. They have no sense of shame and no thought of the dishonour they bring to God and the bad testimony they are to the surrounding nations and because of this they are bringing destruction upon themselves.

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**ISAIAH 3:10-11**

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**The Righteous will Eat the Fruit of their Deeds as will the Wicked.**

- **Isaiah 3:10-11:** Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. <sup>11</sup>Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him.

The righteous in this context refers to the faithful who obeyed the word of the LORD that Isaiah spoke. God told the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to submit to the king of Babylon and go into captivity and He will protect and keep them, but if they act wickedly and rebel against the word of the LORD and remain at the city their enemies will destroy them the great bulk of the population obeyed and God kept them in Babylon for seventy years after which they returned to their own land and their beloved city Jerusalem in triumphant joy united as one nation.

Almost all who remained in the city were destroyed. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the faithful people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel was to be built.

**Women Rule over My People, and Princes Devour My Vineyard.**

- **Isaiah 3:12-15:** 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. <sup>13</sup>The LORD has taken his place to contend; he stands to judge peoples. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

**Women rule over God's people:** perhaps because all the wise men have been killed in battle or because there are no men willing to rule over the nation.

**The elders and princes of God's people:** have not only mislead God's people, but also neglected and oppressed the poor either by force or by perverting justice and taken what rightfully belonged to them for themselves.

**It is you who have devoured the vineyard:** refers to the king, the priests and the rulers who were leading the people to destruction, by setting their hearts diamond hard against the word of the LORD and instead following their own corrupt ways and teaching the people to do the same. This shines a brilliant spotlight upon how important it is to have faithful leaders who have hearts of integrity and value the word of God above their own selfish ambition; the lust for power; the prideful desire to be considered as someone important or to be rich and famous. When the people of Israel had kings, priest's and rulers of integrity who esteemed God more than themselves they did what was right before God, likewise when they had corrupt kings and priests, they became corrupt.

**Daughters of Zion are Haughty and walk Tinkling with their Feet.**

- **Isaiah 3:16-24:** The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet, <sup>17</sup>therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts. <sup>18</sup>In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; <sup>19</sup>the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarves; <sup>20</sup>the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; <sup>21</sup>the signet rings and nose rings; <sup>22</sup>the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; <sup>23</sup>the mirrors, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils. <sup>24</sup>Instead of perfume there will be rottenness; and instead of a belt, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a skirt of sackcloth; and branding (burning in KJV) instead of beauty.

**Daughters of Jerusalem and of Zion:** can be applied to literal daughters being born to citizens of Jerusalem and figuratively to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and by extension the tribes of Judah. At certain times the Scriptures personifies Jerusalem as having an evil heart and wicked thoughts and Zion and Jerusalem as a rebellious woman giving birth to her first child (Jer. 4:14) (Jer. 4:31) and at other times Jerusalem is personified as a mother with children. Her children are the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the king, the officials, the priests, the prophets, rulers and leaders, husbands and their wives, their children and the people of Judah. (Jer. 4:11) (Lam. 2:15) (Jer. 6:23). The daughter of Zion refers to the people of Benjamin, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and those dwelling on the mountain (Isaiah 10:32) (Jer. 6:1-2). When they are spoken of as virgin daughters or a virgin woman it implies that they only have one husband (i.e., one God) compared to the pagans who had many husbands

(i.e., many gods). (Lam. 2:13). The expression, “the daughters of Jerusalem,” carries the idea that they are the weaker ones that need protecting (i.e., Judah was only two tribes whereas Ephraim was ten tribes). The Scriptures also speak of the daughters of Babylon and the daughters of Egypt when referring to the inhabitants of Babylon and of Egypt (Isaiah 47:1-5) (Jer. 46:24).

**The heads of the daughters of Zion:** refers to the principle women of Judah those who belonged to the royal family of the king and the families of the princes. These women would adorn themselves with the finest of jewellery, the most beautiful of bracelets, rings and scarves and cover themselves with the best of perfumes and wear the richest of garments and spend much time binding, plaiting, and curling their hair and admiring themselves in front of mirrors.

**The Lord will smite with a scab:** (v17) the word scab comes from the Hebrew word (*cappachath*) it literally means the mange (as making the hair fall off) caused by a scab, perhaps leprosy or some other type of disease that causes baldness. This means that the statement, “the LORD will humble the head of the daughters of Zion,” means they will suffer some form of sickness that will cause their hair to fall out.

**The LORD will lay bare their secret parts:** (v17) can carry the following two ideas:

1. When their city was conquered by their enemies and they were taken into captivity it was a custom of some conquerors with prisoners to shave the head bald. For a woman (particularly those of the royal house spoken of in these verses) this would not only be extremely degrading, but also a great humiliation especially when the women in focus prided themselves on their braided and curled hair. To support this idea is the following Scripture:

- If a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. (1 Corinthians 11:15).

Added to this we are told in verse twenty-four of this chapter that instead of wearing well-set hair the women will have baldness. For a woman to be stripped of her hair she is stripped of her crowning glory. I have personally known woman who have been told they had cancer and their first fear was the thought of losing their hair.

2. It was the barbarous custom of the conquerors of those times to strip their captives naked, and to make them travel in that condition and when in captivity to rape the women. There could be nothing more horrific for a woman than either of these.

- The king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, the nakedness of Egypt. (Isaiah 20:4).

Nahum when speaking of the overthrow of Nineveh paints this idea in very graphic language:

- Behold, I am against you (Nineveh), declares the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. <sup>6</sup>I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. (Nahum 3:5-6).

Whether it was baldness, sexual abuse or having the body stripped of all clothing and publicly exposed all are the height of cruelty and indignity and especially to the women describe in these verses who had indulged themselves in all manner of delicacies of living, and all the embellishments of ornamental dress.

**Instead of perfume there will be rottenness:** (v24) Babylon invaded the land of Judah and took the people captive for seventy years during which time these women of wealth and royalty no longer wore expensive belts and rich robes or braided their hair, but instead wore a skirt of



sackcloth, a rope for a belt and were bald. Added to this humiliation we are told that instead of beauty they will be branded (burning in KJV). The word branded comes from the Hebrew word (*kiy*) it literally means a brand or scar which means that some type of mark was brutally burnt into the flesh of their body.

**NOTE:** this does not mean it is a sin for a woman to use makeup or wear nice cloths as some teach. The sin of these women was that they with great pride considered themselves superior to others because of their status, their beauty and their expensive clothing. They not only treated the poor and those who could only afford the cheapest of clothing with disdain, but also considered them as inferior and lessor humans. These women were arrogantly walking around with their heads in the air in an attitude of superiority over others. This attitude of haughty pride and lack of compassion toward the less fortunate was their sin, not their clothing.

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### ISAIAH 3:25-26

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#### **Your Mighty Men will Fall in Battle and the City Gates will Lament.**

- **Isaiah 3:25-26:** Your men shall fall by the sword and your mighty men in battle. <sup>26</sup>And her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground.

Jerusalem is often personified as a woman. The city was surrounded with walls with stately gates. These gates became the chief place of meeting and business, because people were constantly coming and going. The picture of these verses is of all the men of the city being killed in battle, the inhabitants of the city being taken captive and the streets lying empty with the gates being utterly broken and Jerusalem mourning because there is no longer anyone coming through her gates and into her streets. She is like a woman without children mourning over her beautiful gates lying in the dust of the ground. Jerusalem in these verses is represented as a woman sitting at her gates in a posture of grief. It is fascinating that one of the many coins of silver and bronze originally issued by the Roman Emperor to celebrate the captivity of Judea and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD show on the reverse side a female sitting in an attitude of mourning at the base of a palm tree, with the inscription, "judea capta." (Judea is captured).

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It should be highlighted here that the passage in this chapter refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and not to its captivity by the Romans. Judea being represented by a mournful woman bewailing the loss of her husband (the men) and her children (the inhabitants) is a tender image of desolation. Though the Roman coin was made to celebrate Rome's victory and not King Nebuchadnezzar's victory it does nevertheless beautifully and very clearly reflect the following prophetic words of Isaiah:

- Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence. (Isaiah 3:8).
- Your men shall fall by the sword and your mighty men in battle. <sup>26</sup>And her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground. (Isaiah 3:25-26).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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