

The Book of Isaiah

Chapter Five

Isaiah having spent chapters 1-4 on the “why” of God’s judgment will now sing a song of remorse regarding the fall of the nation. This song (1-7) ends with 6 woes pronounced against the nation. And then in chapter 6 Isaiah’s commission to preach against the nation is recorded whereby he is told to proclaim his message **“until the cities be wasted without inhabitant and the houses without man. And the land be utterly desolate.” (6:11).**

The Song of the Vineyard (1-7):

It would be well advised for the reader to read Matthew 21:28-46 before studying Isaiah 5:1-7.

The Song is concerning God and the nation of Israel. It is a summation of the previous chapters where God is defending His righteous dealings with the nation. This song harkens back to chapter one, **“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” (Isaiah 1:2)**

God is not to be blamed for Israel’s coming calamity, there is nothing more that God could have done to set the nation on the right path, to guide and provide for it. The children of Israel are to be blamed (look at verse 5).

(1) The song starts with, “My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill” (10). The vineyard is the whole of Israel, and the fruitful hill is the land in which they were planted (7).

(2) God brought the nation into the promised land and put a hedge of protection around them. He removed the enemies and their idols and planted Judah in Jerusalem and placed His temple on a mount in the midst of it.

And when the wellbeloved looked that it should bring forth grapes there was only wild grapes, rebellious children. The rebellious of the nation has always been an issue for the Jewish people since the day the Lord brought them out of Egypt; however, they truly raise up a generation that “knew not the Lord” once they entered the Promised Land **((Judges 2:10-13).**

(3-4) There is nothing more that God could have done for His people. The Husbandman is not to be blamed for the corrupt fruit. God did everything for Adam and yet he sinned. God did everything for David and yet he sinned (2 Sam. 12:7-8). There was nothing wrong with the soil. The problem was with the vine. They simply wanted to be wild grapes. Fruit is a result of what we are, not what we do. The accusation of today is, "God made me this way".

Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? (Jeremiah 2:21)

(5-6) God's hand of protection will be removed from the nation: **"I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies."** (Jeremiah 12:7 cf. Lev. 26:31-33)

God will allow Israel's enemies to come within the gates of Jerusalem (**Lam. 1:10; 4:12**). First the Assyrians come and take away the 10 northern Tribes and then the Babylonians will come and take the remaining of Israel until the land is wasted. (**Deut. 28:49-52; 2Ch. 36:19-21; Jer. 25:11; 45:4**).

The land will no longer yield her fruit, it will become dry and desolate, drought will become the norm (**Deut. 28:23-24**).

(7) The conclusion of the song: He looked for **judgment**; but behold **oppression**; for **righteousness** but behold a **cry** (**Zech. 7:9-14**).

What is to follow is a chorus of "woes" against the crimes of the nation.

The First Woe of Covetous Practices (8-10): The covetous practice of buying up the land by a single landlord at the expense of all others is the issue here. God will see that their extended holdings yield no more fruit¹.

The bath, a measurement of liquid contained about eight gallons. Thus, 10 acers yielded only 10 gallons of wine. An ephah was of the same quantity with the bath, only the bath was the measure of liquid things, the ephah of dry things; and an ephah was the tenth

¹ An example of this truth is what happened to create the great dust bowl in the Midwest. See the documentary entitled, "The dust bowl" by Ken Burns.

part of an homer. So instead of the increase which that fruitful land commonly yielded, they should loose nine parts of their seed.

Concerning the land Israel was to inherit, it was to have a yearly sabbath of rest. Israel will ultimately go into captivity as a direct result of violating this commandment (Lev. 25:4-6; 26:34-35, 43).

The Second Woe of Self-indulgence (11-17): The nation had become a nation of drunkards and revelers with no regard to the working of the Lord (**I Cor. 15:32**). Drunkenness leads to the deadening of the senses to spiritual things.

The judgment is against the “mean” low in rank and the “mighty” for the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness (**16**). Once this happens, “then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat” (**17**). See 2 Kings 25:8-12.

The Third Woe of Provocation (18-19): Rather than resisting sin, they welcome sin with open arms. Instead of being drawn by sin (**James 1:14**), they draw sin unto themselves like pulling a cart towards them with a rope.

Because God’s work of judgment against them is delayed they provoked and defied God saying, “let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!”. The truth of this passage is Ecclesiastes 8:11 and 2 Peter 3:3-4.

The Forth Woe of Relativism (20): The idea of this verse is “truth is relative” (cf. Isa. 59:14). The damaging effects of a lack of absolutes and situational ethics leads to moral confusion and moral perversion: “**Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?**” (Malachi 2:17 cf. Isa. 25:15, 16).

Redefining sin and repackaging sin were the standard of the day, as it is in our time.

The Fifth Woe of Egotism (21): Woe into the proud intellectual who thinks he knows better than God (2 Tim. 3:7). Those who think they are “wise” and “prudent” but their

only measuring stick is themselves. For the Christian the measuring stick is Christ: **"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"** (Ephesians 4:13)

Woe unto them who are full of self, giving no thought to how God looks at them.

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:7)

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. (Proverbs 12:15)

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. (Proverbs 21:2)

There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. (Proverbs 30:12)

A lady asked E.W. Bullinger where she should go to church, he replied, "where Christ is exalted, and man is abased".

The Sixth Woe of Injustice (22-23): The leaders of the nation have lost their sense of justice due in part to strong drink: **"But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."** (Isaiah 28:7)

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. (Proverbs 31:4-5)

Two metaphors describe the impending judgment from God.

A Raging Fire (24-25): Fire is always associated with God's wrath both literally and figuratively: **"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:"** (2 Thessalonians 1:8)

" The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his

indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” (Nahum 1:5-6)

(Matt. 3:12; Joel 2:1-3; Zech. 13:9).

God’s hand is raised in judgment and will not lower until it is complete (9:12, 17, 21 and 10:4).

A Raising Flag (26-30): An “ensign” is a flag or banner that people rally to. God is raising the flag to rally the heathen nations to come and judge His people. Assyria will come first, invading the northern tribal lands coming to the very walls of Jerusalem. The Babylonians will then come and take Jerusalem. God is removing the protective hedge around Judah (vs. 5).