

Is. 5:1 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

Is. 5:2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

The first problem I encounter here is who is singing and to whom about whom? It would appear to be Isaiah singing back to God a song of God about His vineyard (identified as Israel in verse 7). This vineyard is in a rich and fertile mountain. God made every possible provision for His vineyard to bring forth wonderful fruit. Having provided so carefully and caringly for this vineyard, His expectation was that it would produce abundant, good fruit—instead it produced *wild grapes*. The Hebrew indicates that it caused a stink; it produced poison berries.

These words are a challenge to look inward to self. Have we true believers today not been provided for as lovingly as God provided for Israel? The obvious question emerges: How does my fruit smell to the Lord?

Is. 5:3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

Is. 5:4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

God is calling for a judgment, an analysis of the situation between God and His vineyard. He wants those who dwell in Jerusalem, the people of Judah, to tell Him just what else He could have done for His vineyard. What was it possibly lacking? What possible justification could they present for turning away from God and turning to the idolatrous ways of the nations around them? This is obviously a rhetorical question since there is no possible justification.

I can't help but think that God must look at America in the same way. We were founded on biblical principles and became a force of evangelism in the world. God has obviously blessed us. Yet, now we have practically spit in His face in thanks for that blessing. We are continuing to make decisions that reflect rebellion and ingratitude. Morality is no longer assessed based on His Word; in fact, His Word is questioned as to it truly being "His Word." What possible justification can there be for these actions?

Is. 5:5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; *and* break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

Is. 5:6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

Again we are going to get a description of judgment. Why does God keep repeating Himself through His prophet? Why do parents have to keep correcting their children? Why do we impose consequences for disobedience? It's in our sin nature to disobey. As parents, we announce consequences in hopes of avoiding the necessity of having to implement them. God knows the end from the beginning, yet He is patient and long suffering. He loves His children and wants them to be able to recognize that caring and patience when they look back regarding His actions on their behalf. They will have no excuses. He spelled the whole thing out for them beforehand.

First, God is going to remove the hedge of protection that He has had in place around His vineyard. Things that would destroy it, enemies to its fruitfulness, would be allowed in. He would cause it to become a place of waste, ruin, sadness, and gloom. He will not prune it (get rid of the useless parts) or dig it (get rid of the weeds). He will allow the briars and thorns to choke it and will withhold the nourishment of the rain from it.

Is. 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Now Isaiah specifically identifies the vineyard of YHWH as the nation of Israel, and Judah as His pleasant plant (a special place of delight in His vineyard). As He observed His people, He looked for sound judgment and reasoning according to His law, but what He observed was oppression (the result of ignoring His law). He looked for righteousness according to His law, but He observed a *cry* (a shriek of fright, horror, and anguish) as a result of their sin and rebellion.

Is. 5:8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

God saw greedy men. Men were intent on gaining more and more wealth. There was no concern for the rest of the people and their needs. Isaiah says *woe* to these people. In other words, you are going to suffer sorrow because of your greed.

Is. 5:9 In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.

Is. 5:10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.

YHWH had told Isaiah that many houses of the noble and wealthy will be brought to ruin; they will be left empty. In fact, ten acres of a vineyard will only yield a bath (a bit over 8 gallons) of wine, and the seed of an homer (about 8 bushels) would yield an ephah (approximately 1/2 a bushel) of fruit. These are statements of very poor results. The land would not produce.

Is. 5:11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!

Is. 5:12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.

These verses are an expression of upcoming sorrow. Evidently there were people in the land whose whole purpose for the day was to drink themselves into oblivion. They had no real purpose in life and far too much wealth and time on their hands. They feasted with great entertainment and celebration; but their feasts were no longer centered on the Lord and His blessings upon them.

Is. 5:13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have no knowledge*: and their honourable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

After looking at the Hebrew, I think the better translation would be “Therefore my people are going into captivity.” Why? Because they have no knowledge (comprehension, discernment), their honorable (worthy of honor, righteous) men are famished (suffering hunger), and their multitude (the masses of people) dried up with thirst. I think this is directly tied to the thoughts in the preceding verses. What is happening is a direct result of the greed and selfishness of the *haves* in the land and their utter disregard of the *have nots*.

Also important is the spiritual application to be made. Why are the people being judged? Because they have no spiritual understanding. Their leaders are suffering from spiritual malnutrition; and the people themselves, largely due to their leadership, are suffering from spiritual thirst. The lack of spiritual nourishment has caused the people to fall into sin without thought of the consequences before God.

Is. 5:14 Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

This verse indicates to me that there will be plenty of room in hell for those who choose to go there. As usual, the direction of hell is denoted as down. Isaiah is stating that the gates of hell will open wide to receive many who are in positions of earthly honor and esteem. His statement is regarding Judah/Jerusalem, but is applicable to all who dwell on planet earth.

Is. 5:15 And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:

I think Isaiah is saying that God’s judgment will impact all levels of society—from the man of low esteem to the man of high esteem as well as the proud and arrogant. The difference in being *brought down* and *humbled* seems to be from the perception of the person being affected. The Hebrew for both words include “to depress or sink,” but the word for *humbled* includes the idea of humiliation, which would be more applicable to those in positions of earthly honor or filled with pride.

Is. 5:16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

When God executes judgment, it will result in His being recognized as holy and righteous. Man will recognize that the LORD is exalted (in a position far above and superior to that of man) and deserving of glory.

Is. 5:17 Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

Then – after the time of judgment

The land will be allowed to heal. The lambs will be able to find pasture. The lands that had once belonged to the rich will provide food for those who are traveling through the land.

Is. 5:18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:

Is. 5:19 That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!

Iniquity - **avon**, *aw-vone'*; or **avown**, *aw-vone'*; perversity, i.e. (moral) evil:—fault, iniquity, mischief, punishment (of iniquity), sin.

Cords - **chebel**, *khay'-bel*; from 2254; a rope (as twisted), especially a measuring line; by implication, a district or inheritance (as measured); or a noose; to wind tightly (as a rope), i.e. to bind; specifically, by a pledge; figuratively, to pervert, destroy.

Sin - **chattac̄th**, *khat-tawth'*; an offence (sometimes habitual sinfulness), and its penalty.

Isaiah continues to pronounce several woes (reasons for grief). The first woe in this group is for those who continue in their evil ways and get entwined / twisted up / bound in their evil deeds / idolatries / lies. The result is that their sin becomes habitual, a way of life; and the cord becomes a thick and strong rope.

That type of lifestyle results in pride and arrogance; such men are wise in their own eyes. They have no fear of God and His judgments. They challenge Him to bring it on and put them in their place.

Is. 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

The next woe is directed toward those that are perverting God's truth—they are calling evil things good and good things evil. When we reject God's truth, there is no firm basis for determining right from wrong. Our whole perspective on life

becomes warped. (This is an attitude that is certainly becoming more and more prevalent in society today.) Isaiah's poetic style results in a repetition of the same attitude with different word pictures.

Is. 5:21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

The next woe is directed toward the proud and arrogant. There are so many verses in the scripture that reflect God's attitude toward the proud.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Ezekiel 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

1John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Is. 5:22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:

Is. 5:23 Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

The woes continue—this time to those who are drunkards and alcoholics. Drinking impairs your judgment. When your judgment is impaired, you are more susceptible to taking bribes and making unwise decisions—decisions that benefit the wicked and deny proper justice to the righteous.

Is. 5:24 Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah continues in his eloquent style regarding the future of those who reject the law, the truth from the books of Moses and the Ten Commandments—the word of the God of Israel. They will end up like straw burned in the fire, like dry grass burned in the flame. They will die like a plant with a rotten root; their lives will crumble into dust just as the bloom on a flower. The words *go up* also carry the meaning “cause to burn” in the Hebrew. The word *rottenness* includes the meanings “melting, stink.” There are enough comparisons here to me to be making a reference to burning in hell.

Is. 5:25 Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the

hills did tremble, and their carcasses *were* torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

Isaiah is stating that God is angry with His people--and for good cause. They have given Him plenty of reasons to direct His power in punishment against them. His anger has resulted in death, wounds, and evidently earthquakes. Even after dispensing some judgment, His hand remains in position to strike again. As a parent, I equate God's action to a parent who is determining just how much punishment is necessary to bring about repentance and obedience.

Is. 5:26 And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:

Is. 5:27 None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:

Is. 5:28 Whose arrows *are* sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind:

Is. 5:29 Their roaring *shall be* like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry *it* away safe, and none shall deliver *it*.

Is. 5:30 And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if *one* look unto the land, behold darkness *and* sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

An ensign carries the idea of a signal. It's like God is sending out a message to nations all over the earth to come on over and take their spoil and plunder of His land and His people. The contrast seems to be that although God's own people choose to ignore Him, the other nations of the world will respond to His signal swiftly and powerfully. I personally think this is a reference to the treatment of the Jews throughout history as a direct result of their rejection of God's law and subsequently, His Son. During this time, until the Lord gathers the remnant to usher in His Kingdom, the land of Israel will face destruction, distress, and tribulation; and the *happiness* of heaven will be affected.

I hadn't really thought about the impact in heaven in that way before. Things on earth do affect things in heaven. In that regard, I am sure that the full joy of heaven will not be realized until the Father's plan is completed.

Luke 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Revelation 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.