

Isaiah 5 Commentary

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Time
740-680BC

Isaiah 5:1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill:

- **Now:** Judges 5:1-31 Ps 45:1 101:1
- **well beloved:** Song 2:16 5:2,16 6:3
- **Concerning:** Isa 27:2,3 Ps 80:8 Song 8:11,12 Jer 2:21 Mt 21:33 Mk 12:1 Lk 20:9 Jn 15:1
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To help keep this chapter in context observe the preceding table and the following outline adapted from Talk Thru the Bible which summarizes the first section of Isaiah dealing primarily with prophecies concerning the Kingdom of Judah...

**Prophecies against Judah
Isaiah 1:1-12:6**

- A The Judgment of Judah Isa 1:1-31
- B The Day of the Lord Isa 2:1-4:6
- C The Parable of the Vineyard Isa 5:1-30
- D The Commission of Isaiah Isa 6:1-13
- E The Destruction of Israel by Assyria Isa 7:1-10:4
 - 1 Sign of Immanuel Isa 7:1-25
 - 2 Sign of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz Isa 8:1-22
 - 3 Prophecy of the Messiah's Birth Isa 9:1-7
 - 4 Judgment on Ephraim Isa 9:8-10:4
- F The Destruction of Assyria by God Isa 10:5-12:6
 - 1 Destruction of Assyria Isa 10:5-19
 - 2 Remnant of Israel Isa 10:20-34
 - 3 Restoration of the Messiah's Kingdom Isa 11:1-16
 - 4 Thanksgiving in the Messiah's Kingdom Isa 12:1-6

**PARABLE OF
A VINEYARD**

Who is being addressed in Isaiah 5? Some feel this chapter is addressed to the Northern Kingdom (Israel) whereas others feel the recipient is the Southern Kingdom (Judah - see Isa 1:1 introduction, cp who is addressed in Isa 5:3!). Some feel both the Northern and Southern kingdoms are being addressed. While I feel the primary recipient of this parable was Judah, much of chapter 5 is clearly applicable in principle to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Gary Smith reasons that...

The general statement about the future military defeat of Judah by an unknown enemy in Isa 5:26-30 contrasts with the specific statements found later in Isaiah 7-8 where Assyria is known as the aggressor who will defeat Israel and Judah... The audience Isaiah confronted in these oracles is primarily the wealthy and powerful upper class in Judah... This is not an oracle against the northern kingdom of Israel, but as Isa 5:3 and Isa 5:7 indicate, Isaiah addresses the rulers of Judah and Jerusalem about the failure of the leaders to care for his people. ([New American Commentary: Volume 15a: Isaiah 1-39. B & H Publishing Group](#))

Speaker's Commentary introduces Isaiah 5...

The last 3 chapters began and ended with telling of the glory of a restored Zion. But the body of prophecy was full of rebuke and threatening as regarded the existing community. In the present chapter we have sentence formally pronounced upon Israel and Judah (Ed: An example of a source favoring both kingdoms were the recipient of this prophecy). The sentence as in Nathan's message to David (2Sa 12:1-12) is introduced by a parable in which their guilt is set forth. We have already had the "daughter of Zion" compared to "a booth in a vineyard" (Isa 1:8) and the princes of Judah charged with "eating up" (or "burning") God's vineyard. The latter was a dark saying, waiting to be explained in the present chapter (Isa 5:5). Isaiah 5 is closely connected with Isaiah 4, to which it is a mournful antithesis. Instead of the beautiful "fruit of the earth" (Isa 4:2) are seen "wild grapes." Even the "storm" there brought rain to fertilize the land (Isa 4:6, cp 1Ki 18:41, 45); here the clouds are bidden to "rain no rain upon it" (Isa 5:6);--the tempest in reserve for it being one of devouring fire (Is 5:24) and rattling war-chariots (Is 5:28). ([Speaker's Commentary](#))

H A Ironside introduces this chapter noting that...

Chapter five completes the prophet's address. In the parable of the vineyard, God rehearses His ways with Israel and emphasizes their lack of response to His love and patience. This "Song of the Vineyard" links intimately with our Lord's parable concerning the same subject (Mt 21:33ff), which He put before the scribes and Pharisees shortly before His arrest and crucifixion... This vineyard represents Israel as God viewed them at the beginning of their Palestinian history. Having brought them out of Egypt, He planted them in the land of promise, and there cared for and protected them from the ravages of their enemies. ([Isaiah 5 - The Parable of the Vineyard](#))

Let me sing - Isaiah the singer, the "minister of music". Compare the prophetic promise and warning in the Song of Moses (Dt 31:19, 20, 21, 22) Songs sometimes contain a great deal of theology in a few lyrics, which emphasizes the point that modern choruses should do no less (i.e., "no less" that great theology, which sadly is far too often lacking in the sometimes sappy, repetitious refrains).

THOUGHT - Isaiah 5 teaches us that songs can and should teach truth, a principle that all budding Christian song writers would do well to heed. What genre of theological truth is your flock being fed during the "worship time"? America is slowly albeit surely dying morally and ethically. It is vitally, even critically important for the true Church to arise and shine His light into the darkness, and her music will be part of any Spirit driven revival that God might be pleased to send!

Wiersbe...

The preacher became a troubadour and sang a folk song

Keil and Delitzsch...

The prophet commenced his first address in Isaiah 1 like another Moses; the second, which covered no less ground, he opened with the text of an earlier prophecy; and now he commences the third like a **musician**, addressing both himself and his hearers with enticing words... The fugitive rhythm, the musical euphony, the charming assonances in this appeal, it is impossible to reproduce. They are perfectly inimitable.

My well beloved - Isaiah expressing the depth of his devotion refers to Jehovah as his **beloved**. as he sings of the tender care and concern Jehovah had for His **vineyard**.

Keil and Delitzsch...

The person to whom the song referred, to whom it applied, of whom it treated, was the singer's own beloved (Jehovah). It was a song of his dearest one (not his cousin, as Luther renders it...) touching his vineyard.

His vineyard - Identified as **Israel** and **Judah** in Isa 5:7. Christ uses the same metaphor in (Mt 21:33-45).

John Calvin...

No possession is dearer to a man than a vineyard, and there is none that demands more constant and persevering toil. Not only, therefore, does the Lord declare that we are his beloved inheritance, but at the same time points out his care and anxiety about us.

Israel is referred to as a **vine** several times in Scripture (Ps. 80:8-16 Isa 27:2, 3; Eze17:6; 19:10; Mt Hos. 10:1 21:33-41).

In Ezekiel Jehovah says that a vine that does not produce fruit is good for nothing (Ezek 15:2, 3, 4, 5) and here in Isaiah 5 this is the substance of Jehovah's complaint against Israel and Judah - no good grapes.

Considering the fact that in the OT, Israel was described as the wife of Jehovah, the psalmist's declaration is interesting...

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house... (Ps 128:3)

God's "wife" had proven herself anything but a faithful, fruitful vine!

A fertile hill - Mt Zion.

Fertile (shemen) is used 176x in the OT and 10 in Isaiah (Isa 1:6; 5:1; 10:27; 25:6; 28:1, 4; 39:2; 41:19; 57:9; 61:3)

Keil and Delitzsch...

The vineyard was situated upon a *keren* (**Ed**: *qeren* = Hebrew for horn, that which projects) i.e., upon a prominent mountain peak projecting like a horn, and therefore open to the sun on all sides... This mountain horn was *ben-shemen* (**Ed**: "son of fertility" figuratively = richness, plenty, lavish), a child of fatness: the fatness was innate, it belonged to it by nature (*shemen* is used, as in Isa 28:1, to denote the fertility of a nutritive loamy soil). And the owner of the vineyard spared no attention or trouble.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writing on **Jehovah's Vineyard** says...

The vine even more commonly symbolizes Israel than the fig tree. Isaiah 3:14, 15 accuses Israel's leadership of spoiling God's vineyard (Israel) when they oppressed the people. Isaiah 5:1–7's elaboration on this theme begins with the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1, 2). It pictures a vineyard planted on excellent soil with day-long sunlight. The farmer did everything to make it produce. However, instead of yielding edible grapes (justice and righteousness), the nation produced wild sour grapes (oppression), for which it would suffer discipline. Later, Isaiah 27:2–6 depicts a brighter future for this vineyard. God will replant and carefully watch, so Israel will blossom, bud, and produce fruit for the entire world. In the future kingdom, Israel will bring justice and righteousness among the nations. ([Israelology Part 6](#))

Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr has an interesting point of application

In 2Corinthians 6:1 the Apostle Paul says a strange thing: **"We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain."** How can **grace** be received in vain? Isn't **grace** God's all-forgiving kindness to us? Doesn't **God's grace** compensate even for our half-hearted responses to God? Why then does Paul urge us not to receive the **grace of God** in vain? Because **God's grace** not only accepts us, it also transforms us.

But if all we want out of God is acceptance without transformation, we are receiving his grace in vain and our Christianity is worthless. The power of grace is not automatic.

Each of us lives out of an inner world with its own moral and conceptual and emotional topography. The obstacles to God there are formidable. Our intuitive ways of thinking, the tilt of our very desires—these powerful internal structures can hinder the advance of God. ([Isaiah - God Saves Sinners Preaching the Word](#)) (Bolding and color added for emphasis)

Isaiah 5:2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones:

- **Dug** or, made a wall about it, Ex 33:16 Nu 23:9 Dt 32:8,9 Ps 44:1-3 Ro 9:4
- **planted**: Jer 2:21
- **choicest vine**: Jdg 16:4
- **built**: Isa 1:8 Mic 4:8
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

This passage emphasizes the owner's love for and devotion to his vineyard.

This truth of God's gracious provision is echoed in **Psalm 80**...

You (Jehovah) removed a **vine** (Israel) from Egypt. You drove out the nations and planted it (In the Promised Land). You cleared the ground before it, and it took deep root and filled the land (the vine transplanted from Egypt had spread throughout Canaan). (Ps 80:8,9)

Charles Spurgeon comments...

You removed a vine from Egypt - There it was in unfriendly soil: the waters of the Nile watered it not, but were as death to its shoots, while the inhabitants of the land despised it and trampled it down. Glorious was the right hand of the Lord when with power and great wonders he removed His pleasant plant in the teeth of those who sought its destruction.

You drove out the nations and planted it - Seven nations were dug out to make space for the vine of the Lord (cp Dt 4:37, 38, 7:1); the old trees, which long had engrossed the soil, were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine (cp Dt 7:6, 14:2). It was securely placed in its appointed position with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceeding weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruit bearing plant.

You cleared the ground before it - The weeds, brambles, and huge stones were cleared; the Amorites, and their brethren in iniquity, were made to quit the scene, their forces were routed, their kings slain, their cities captures, and Canaan became like a plot of land, made ready for a vineyard (cp Dt 1:30).

It took deep root and filled the land - Israel became settled and established as a vine well rooted, and then it began to flourish and to spread to every side. This analogy might be applied to the experience of every believer in Jesus. The Lord has planted us, we are growing downward, "rooting roots," and by his grace we are also advancing in manifest enlargement. The same is true of the church in a yet closer degree, for at this moment through the goodwill of the dresser of the vineyard her branches spread far and wide.

Jesus spoke from Isaiah 5 when He addressed "the chief priests and the elders of the people" in the Temple, declaring...

Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. (Mt 21:33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 - note in this last verse they pass judgment on themselves! Cp Mk 12:1ff)

Matthew Henry comments...This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; and what is spoken to convict them, is spoken to caution all (**Ed**: The privileged, wealthy church in America needs to take heed!) that enjoy the privileges (of the "vine" Israel).

Spurgeon asks...Has it been so with us? Have we rewarded the Well-beloved thus ungratefully for all his pains? Have we given him hardness of heart, instead of repentance; unbelief, instead of faith; indifference, instead of love; idleness, instead of holy industry; impurity, instead of holiness?

Dug it all about - The verb means to dig around as in the preparation of a plot of land for planting.

Built a tower - It was common practice to build a stone tower on a hilltop to keep watch over their lands, protecting them against wild animals and thieves. The tower would allow watchmen to see in all directions which speaks of Jehovah's all sufficient provision of protection for His vineyard. Contrast the more modest "shelter" of (Isa 1:8). God's vineyard had every advantage.

Planted it - Jehovah reiterates His sovereign provision to Israel...

Yet I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine? (Jer 2:21)

Hewed out a wine vat (NIV = "winepress") - A trough into which the grape juice flowed. The grapes were trampled on, and the juice flowed into the wine vat (cf. Jer 48:33; Am 9:13). The wine vat reflected God's hope for a good (spiritual) harvest (**expected it to produce good grapes**).

As **MacDonald** explains that...

Instead of the harvest He (Jehovah had) expected (**obedience**, thanksgiving, love, worship, service), He found foul-smelling, wild grapes (**disobedience**, rebellion, idolatry).

Spurgeon pondering the advantages outlined in this passage writes...

I have been thinking of the advantages of my own position towards the Lord, and lamenting with great shamefacedness that I am not bringing forth such fruit to him as my position demands. Considering our privileges, advantages, and opportunities, I fear that many of us have need to feel great searchings of the

heart.

He expected (Isa 5:2KJV - "He looked") - (Note the same phrase in Isa 5:4 with same Hebrew word, also used in Isa 5:7 = "looked") The Hebrew verb qavah conveys the idea of hope, not in the sense of "I hope so" but with a eager look with confident expectation of future fulfillment.

Worthless grapes - KJV renders them "wild grapes". The word in Hebrew is literally "stink fruit" or '**Stinkberries!** Wild grapes can have a sour or bad taste of wild grapes compared to the sweetness of the cultivated grapes. Stinkberries conger up the picture of the foul smell of sin in the nostrils of the Lord. In spite of Jehovah's provision and protection for His **vineyard**, it still became unproductive.

What were the worthless grapes? The answer is found in the six **woes** that follow, each **woe** naming sins that brought judgment on the vineyard.

Adam Clarke calls these grapes...

Poisonous berries... not merely useless, unprofitable grapes, such as wild grapes; but grapes offensive to the smell, noxious, poisonous.

J A Motyer comments...

Delitzsch notes that the difference between a wild and a domestic vine is only in the matter of care. **This is exactly the point: what can now be done for the people of God when a total work of grace has been lavished on them and yet they remain as if grace had never touched them?** ([The Prophecy of Isaiah- An Introduction & Commentary ...](#) Is 5:2) (Bolding added)

Bultema makes a strong comment...

We are dealing here with something worse than unfruitfulness. The New Testament also speaks of a faith that brings forth fruit, but the fruit is dead works, which pollute the air like a cadaver. The wolfs bane, or wild vine (2Ki 4:39), does bear beautiful berries, but they are bitter, foul-smelling and poisonous in nature. This is a precise description of the self-willed and false religion of the unfaithful covenant people.

A B Simpson...

The peculiarity of the wild grape is that it is purely natural, an ungrafted fruit. Therefore it represents most fittingly the quality of all mere natural and human goodness. Human nature can only produce wild grapes; luxuriant and beautiful the vine may seem, but the fruit is worthless. So are all the fruits and graces that grow upon the stalk of humanity. It is only when it is cut back and Christ is grafted into the stalk of our old human nature that there is any good in us. All the failures of the Old Testament were intended to demonstrate this fact, and still men are looking for the development of goodness through education and Christian endeavor instead of through fellowship with the cross of Jesus Christ and entering into His death and resurrection life. (A. B. Simpson. Christ in the Bible - Isaiah)

Lesson (from Rich Cathers) - **Sometimes it's not the parents' fault.** This vineyard was in a "very fruitful hill". There was no problem with it being in the wrong "environment". Everything was done for it to make it succeed.

Parents – it's not always your fault. Sure, there are going to be times when a child's disobedience is directly related to a sin or mistake of the parent. But there are also going to be times when you've given them everything they need to succeed, and they're still going to choose the way of sin.

Look at God's record as a parent with Adam and Eve. Could there have been a better Father? ([Isaiah 5](#))

Isaiah 5:3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard:

- Ps 50:4-6 51:4 Jer 2:4,5 Mic 6:2,3 Mt 21:40,41 Mk 12:9-12 Lk 20:15,16 Ro 2:5 3:4
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Jerusalem and Judah - This supports the premise that this chapter is directly primarily to the Southern kingdom.

Judge between Me and My vineyard - The scene shifts to a courtroom (cp Isa 1:2-17; Isa 3:14, 15), and this time the human

hearers are to act as assessors as the owner of the vineyard speaks. In essence, God is saying that despite every provision, the vineyard was fruitless. Who is to blame for the harvest of only wild grapes? There are only two possible explanations. Either He did not keep His end of the bargain or the vineyard failed to yield fruit. In the next verse God opens Himself to the readers to find fault with Him!

Scripture tells us, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" (Lk 12:48).

Spurgeon applies this passage asking...

O you that profess to be his people, what more could Christ have done for you? What more could the Holy Spirit have done? What richer promises, what wiser precepts, what kinder providences, what more gracious patience?"

Guzik comments...

We know, and they knew, that farming is a matter of cause and effect. Literally, one could never "blame" a vineyard for lack of production. But in the Lord's vineyard, the will of man is a factor. (Isaiah 5 Commentary)

Earlier **Isaiah** had recorded...

The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people, "It is you who have devoured the vineyard; The plunder of the poor is in your houses. (Isaiah 3:14)

Gary Smith writes that...

This song reminded the listener that God was the lover who had poured out his love for his special vineyard. Each person in his vineyard was specially created, planted, and continually cared for by God's grace. People deserved no credit for their election or their privileged status; it happened totally by grace. Once God chooses an individual or a people, he tenderly cares for and protects his own. As this happens he patiently waits for his people to produce good fruit in their lives. In his sovereign oversight of his people God observes what happens in society and he knows what kind of fruit his chosen vines produce. ([New American Commentary: Volume 15a: Isaiah 1-39. Page183. B & H Publishing Group](#))

Isaiah 5:4 What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?:

- Isa 1:5 2Ch 36:14-16 Jer 2:30,31 6:29,30 Eze 24:13 Mt 23:37 Ac 7:51-60
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

What more was there to do - We see the mourning of a father. God's "frustration" is evident in this passage. **What more** indicates that God had done everything He could to ensure Israel would be "fruitful", so they are **without excuse!**

Application of truth: Beloved, God has given us as believers **everything necessary for life and godliness** (2Pe 1:3-note) and yet so many of us continue to yield little more than what amounts to "stinking grapes"! And they make excuses (it's my background, it's my spouse, it's my kids), but God says in light of His abundant provision, we are without excuse. Let us do a personal inventory, inspecting our life for fruit that will remain (Jn 15:16) and if necessary confessing our empty excuses for failing to bring forth fruit "some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty" (Mt 13:8, 23)

Why when I expected it ("looked" in Isa 5:4KJV - see note on Isa 5:2) - Why did they not yield grapes? Is it God's fault? From the preceding context, clearly it is not, thus the Vineyard is culpable. God was looking expectantly for spiritual fruit from Israel. And dear NT believer, He is looking expectantly at our "vineyards"? Are we living obediently and thereby fruitfully? If not, why not? We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ? We are without excuse? What will we say at the Judgment Seat of Christ? (2Cor 5:10-note, cp 1Co 3:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) (**See related subjects:** Bearing fruit = karpophoreo; Fruit - karpos)

NLT Study Bible...

Isaiah wanted the audience to condemn the vineyard before he revealed that in fact they were the vineyard (Isa 5:7) This rhetorical tactic is similar to the one Nathan used to confront David (2Sa 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Worthless ones - Stinking grapes - not merely wild, but rancid! The six fold stinking fruit is described below, each one being introduced with a **woe** (Isa 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22)

Spurgeon...

How much is our condition like that of Israel and Judah! What more could God have done for us? We have the Bible and the ministry of the gospel: as a family we are a garden walled around, and our country is the fruitful field of true religion. What fruit are we yielding? If we are barren, what must we expect? Judgment is always in proportion to privilege misused. May grace be upon us all, that we may bear much fruit unto the Lord our God.

H A Ironside...

After all the care He had lavished upon Israel, His loving provision for their needs, His gracious forgiveness extended to them over and over again when they failed, how could it be possible that there would be no suitable fruit for Him? Why should they produce only that which was worthless and useless? Alas, it was but the manifestation of a heart that had departed from the living God. And so, after giving them one opportunity after another to repent and judge themselves in His sight, He finally decided to give them up ([Isaiah 5 - The Parable of the Vineyard](#))

BELOVED IN CHRIST ARE YOU A FRUITFUL VINEYARD?

F B Meyer addresses this question in the following devotional...

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? - This is what the Owner of all souls will say of His dealings with each when the discipline and husbandry of time are over (cp Eph 5:16-note, Ps 90:12-note). Each of us is God's vineyard, and for each God has done the best possible. At the end of all things God will have no reason to feel that had He adopted some other method, the barren waste of some heart would have brought forth fruit. It will be seen then, Omniscience itself being witness, that every soul of man had the chance of becoming a fruitful vineyard; and if he became the reverse, it was due to no failure in either the wisdom or grace of God.

It is hard to believe this, hard to think that you would not have done better in some other circumstances; but it is nevertheless true that God could not have done better or more. He has trenched for water, gathered out stones which had hindered your fruitfulness, and **planted** you with slips from the True Vine (2Cor 5:17, Jn 15:5). There has been the **tower** of His protection, and the **wine-press** of suffering! Ah, how eagerly He has looked that you should bring forth grapes! The pity of it is that there has been nothing but the wild growth of nature (cp **flesh**)! But God cannot take the blame for this. He could not have done more than He has done. Alas that we should have so often thwarted Him!

"When I looked." (Isa 5:4KJV) "The Father seeketh," our Savior said (Jn 4:23KJV). He comes down the garden path full often, seeking from us the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note), the grace of prayer (1Th 5:17-note) and supplication (Php 4:6-note, Php 4:7-note), the plants of his delight. "Let us see," He says, "whether the vine hath budded, and its blossom be opened, and the pomegranates be in flower." (Song 7:12) Too often it is as when Jesus looked for figs — there was nothing but leaves! (See Mt 21:19, cp Lk 3:9, Lk 13:6, 7, 8,9) (Our Daily Homily)

Isaiah 5:5 So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground:

- **let Me:** Ge 11:4,7
- **I will:** Isa 27:10,11 Lev 26:31, 32, 33, 34, 35 Dt 28:49, 50, 51, 52 2Ch 36:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Neh 2:3 Ps 74:1-10 80:12, 13, 14, 15, 16 La 1:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 4:12
- **trampled:** Heb. for a treading, Isa 10:6 25:10 28:3,18 La 1:15 Da 8:13 Lk 21:24 Rev 11:2
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So now - Because of what He has said (provision, protection failed to bring forth production) Jehovah would judge His **vineyard**.

Remove its hedge - Speaks of Jehovah's good hand of favor and protection being removed as a result of their disobedience. In fact notice who it is that **will break down its wall** -- Jehovah Himself!

Hedge... wall - This suggest that it was even "double fenced"!

It will become trampled ground - This prophecy (recall Isaiah prophesies from 740-680BC) was literally fulfilled in Nebuchadnezzar's third invasion and final demolition of Jerusalem. The Babylonian trampling of the holy city in 586BC began **the times of the Gentiles (see chart)** (Lk 21:24), which will continue (cp Re 11:2-[note](#)) until the Messiah returns (cp Ro 11:25, 26, 27- see notes on "times of Gentiles") at the end of the **Great Tribulation**.

Although we see God's judgment against the **Vineyard** prophesied here in Isaiah 5, we see God's mercy to restore the **Vineyard** in Isaiah 27. In the context of the **Day of the LORD**, Jehovah promises to restore and root His vine declaring...

In that day (see Isa 27:1 for the "day"), "A **vineyard** of wine, sing of it! 3 "I, the Lord, am its keeper; I water it every moment. So that no one will damage it, I guard it night and day. 4 "I have no wrath. Should someone give Me briars and thorns in battle, Then I would step on them, I would burn them completely. 5 "Or let him rely on My protection, Let him make peace with Me, Let him make peace with Me." 6 **In the days to come** Jacob (cp the "Vine") will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and **they will fill the whole world with fruit (Ed: Beloved Israel has never fulfilled this promise, which is not given the church but to Jacob and Israel. Don't replace Israel with the church! [See study on **Israel of God**] This verse clearly describes the glorious Messianic Age, when Christ returns to reign supreme on earth during the **Millennium**).** (Isa 27:2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

Charles Simeon writes that...

MERCIES are obligations to obedience, and aggravations of the guilt of disobedience. This is declined under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard. The parable in the text foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. Our Lord applied it in reference to the approaching dissolution of their ecclesiastical and civil polity by the Romans. It is applicable also to the Church of God in all ages. (Simeon, C. 1832-63. Horae Homileticae Vol. 7: Proverbs to Isaiah XXVI. P. 490. London)

Isaiah 5:6 I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it:

- **I will lay:** Isa 5:9,10 6:11,12 24:1-3,12 32:13,14 Lev 26:33-35 Dt 29:23 2Ch 36:19-21 Jer 25:11 45:4 Lk 21:24
- **Will:** Isa 7:23-25 Ho 3:4
- **also:** Isa 30:23 Dt 28:23,24 Am 4:7 Zec 14:16,17 Heb 6:6-8 Rev 11:6
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Septuagint renders it

And I will forsake my vineyard; and it shall not be pruned, nor dug, and thorns shall come up upon it as on barren land; and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.

Briars and thorns - Instead of good grapes, the result of no rain in the land. This pair occurs five more times, all in Isaiah (Isa 7:23, 24, 25; Isa 9:18; Isa 27:4).

Calvin remarks

how manifold are the weapons with which God is supplied for punishing our ingratitude when he sees that we despise his kindness

Later **Isaiah** prophesies that...

Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, and instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up, And it will be a memorial to the Lord, for an everlasting sign which will not be cut off. (Isaiah 55:13)

No rain (Lv 26:19; Dt 28:23, 24; Am 4:7, 8) - Would produce barrenness.

Isaiah 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress:

- **vineyard:** Ps 80:8, 9, 10, 11,15 Jer 12:10)(his delightful plant: Heb. plant of his pleasures, Isa 62:5 Ps 147:11 149:4 Song 7:6

Zeph 3:17

- **looked**: Isa 5:2 58:6, 7, 8 Ex 22:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 Mic 6:8 Zec 7:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 Mt 3:8, 9, 10 23:23 Jn 15:2 1Co 6:8, 9, 10, 11 1Jn 3:7,8
- **bloodshed**: Isa 1:6 3:17) (**cry**: Ge 4:10 Ex 2:23,24 3:7 22:21, 22, 23, 24,27 Dt 15:9 Neh 5:1-5 Job 31:38,39 34:28 Pr 21:13 Lk 18:7 Jas 5:4
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE VINEYARD IS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

For - Surely, truly. Introduces the decisive explanation of the identity of the vineyard.

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant- The unsuspecting reader is now shocked by the identification of the Vineyard, which reminds one of how Nathan surprised King David with the indictment "You are the man!" (2Sa 12:7)

Israel... Judah - This speaks of all God's chosen people, which may be why some feel the parable is addressed to both the Northern and Southern kingdoms.

Looked - Waited expectantly (See note on same Hebrew word translated "expected" Isa 5:2) **And what was the fruit?** Not justice and righteousness in the lives of His people (especially the leaders or rulers) but bloodshed... cries from the oppressed!

Justice {mishpat} ... **bloodshed** {mispach} ... **righteousness** {tsedaqah} ... **cry** {tsa'aqah} - The double play on words emphasizes the point that Jehovah's judgment would bring the opposite of what Israel and Judah were expecting. Why? Because they had not met Jehovah's expectations - He expected justice but they committed bloodshed. He expected righteousness but in their oppression by their enemies they cried for help. This clear prophetic warning was not heeded but ignored.

Righteousness - Right living before God and man, ultimately only possible by grace through faith (Ge 15:6).

Derek Kidner paraphrases Isaiah's play on the Hebrew words...

Did he find **right**? Nothing but **riot**! Did he find **decency**? Only **despair**. (The New Bible Commentary)

There is a similar word play in Jeremiah 1:11, 12 between **almond** (shaqed) and **watching over** (shaqad) regarding which **W A Criswell** comments...

Here there is a play on two words which are very similar in appearance and pronunciation. "Almond tree" or "the watcher" (Jer 2:11) is a rendering of the Hebrew word **shaqed**. The Hebrew term translated "I am ready" ("I am watching over") (Jer 1:12) is **shaqad**. The ancients often arranged words cleverly by changing the sense of a word through altering a letter, or by playing upon words similar in sound or sense. As Jeremiah observed the almond tree, he was reminded of God's message that divine surveillance accompanies divine pronouncement. ([Criswell, W A. Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version. 1991. Thomas Nelson](#))

Cry - Israel and Judah would cry out in distress for help, but their loud wailing would be too little, too late as they say!

J C Ryle...

He chose Israel to be a people special to himself. He separated them from the other nations of the earth, and bestowed on them countless blessings; he gave them revelations of himself, while all the rest of the earth was in darkness; he gave them the law, and the covenants, and the oracles of God, while all the world beside was let alone. In short, God dealt with the Jews as a man deals with a piece of land which he fences out and cultivates, while all the country around is left untilled and waste. The vineyard of the Lord was the house of Israel (Isaiah 5:7).

Isaiah 5:8 Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until there is no more room, so that you have to live alone in the midst of the land:

- **to those**: Jer 22:13, 14, 15, 16, 17 Mic 2:2 Hab 2:9, 10, 11, 12 Mt 23:14 Lk 12:16-24
- **field**: 1Ki 21:16, 17, 18, 19, 20)
- **You have**: Heb. ye placed, Ezek 11:15 33:24

SIX WOES DELIVERED

Now in Isa 5:8-15 we are introduced to six woes which specifically identify the reasons justifying God's accusation in Isa 5:7.

Woe - Introduces the first of 6 woes. **Woe** is used mostly by the prophets. Its primary sense is derived from the social context of lamenting at a funeral (1Ki 13:30, Jer 22:18, 34:5) and carries a connotation of death. Woe is also used to mourn the approaching death of someone (Ps 6; Jer 11:18-23)

R. J. Clifford found three general uses of hoy in the OT: (1) funeral laments (eight times) usually translated "alas"; (2) a cry to get attention (four times), usually translated "ho" or "ah"; (3) an announcement of doom (forty-one times and used only by the prophets), usually translated "woe to." The wicked were under the judgment of God and therefore faced a time of ruin and mourning. The only thing left for an unrepentant people was to mourn the destruction of their lives.

Smith observes that...

The pervasive reality of death in this passage is confirmed by references to the mansions that have no occupants (Is 5:9), the descent of nobles into the grave (Is 5:14), the decaying roots (Is 5:24), and the dead bodies (Is 5:25). (Ibid)

Woe (Hebrew = hoy) - 47 verses -

1 Kgs 13:30; Isa 1:4, 24; 5:8, 11, 18, 20ff; 10:1, 5; 17:12; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9f; 55:1; Jer 22:13, 18; 23:1; 30:7; 34:5; 47:6; 48:1; 50:27; Ezek 13:3, 18; 34:2; Amos 5:18; 6:1; Mic 2:1; Nah 3:1; Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19; Zeph 2:5; 3:1; Zech 2:6f; 11:17. Translated in the NAS as Ah(2), alas(11), ho(2), ho there(1), woe(34).

The corresponding Greek word is **ouai** which is an injection of grief or denunciation. It expresses extreme pain or displeasure and calls down painful judgment on someone or something. Woe is a cry which says in essence "How horrible it will be!" ("Woe is me!") as it announces horror, disaster, calamity ("Woe to thee!").

Add house to house - Crafty land barons. Greedy grabbers of land. This explains the "cry of distress" in Isa 5:7. Israel was not to be sold off. The implication is they were not honoring the Year of Jubilee but instead were grabbing land. The rich were getting richer and the poor poorer. They were disobeying the Law (Lev 25:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28; 1Ki 21:1, 2, 3).

God declared long ago that the land did not belong to Israel...

The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. (Lev 25:23) (**Comment:** Criswell asks "Who owns the land known today as Israel? God does. The title deed to that land still belongs to Him. Israel, by God's grace, was chosen to be the tenant, but her presence in the land was conditioned upon obedience.")

Motyer points out that...

Israelite law saw the land as the gift of God (Lv 25:23, 24), and following the original allocation the assumption was that each holding would remain within the family (Lv. 25; Nu. 27:1-11; 36:1-12; Ru. 4:1, 2, 3, 4). But by the time of Isaiah (cf. Mic 2:2, 9) the day of the land-speculator had dawned. Amos 2:6, 7, 8 shows the powerful rich using legal processes to defraud the poor and enrich themselves ([The Prophecy of Isaiah- An Introduction & Commentary ...](#) Is 5:2)

NET Bible notes that...

This verse does not condemn real estate endeavors per se, but refers to the way in which the rich bureaucrats of Judah accumulated property by exploiting the poor, in violation of the covenantal principle that the land belonged to God and that every family was to have its own portion of land.

Matthew Henry...

The world and the flesh are the two great enemies that we are in danger of being overpowered by; yet we are in no danger if we do not ourselves yield to them. Eagerness of the world, and indulgence of the flesh, are the two sins against which the prophet, in God's name, here denounces woes. These were sins which then abounded among the men of Judah, some of the wild grapes they brought forth (Isa 5:4), and for which God

threatens to bring ruin upon them. They are sins which we have all need to stand upon our guard against and dread the consequences of.

Here is a woe to those who set their hearts on the wealth of the world. Not that it is sinful for those who have a house and a field to purchase another; but the fault is, that they never know when they have enough. Covetousness is idolatry; and while many envy the prosperous, wretched man, the Lord denounces awful woes upon him. How applicable to many among us! God has many ways to empty the most populous cities. Those who set their hearts upon the world, will justly be disappointed.

The Greed Problem - Herbert Vander Lugt - When I was 15 years old, I spent as much time as I could in the library reading articles and books about social justice. I was troubled by the fact that thousands of men who were willing to work hard could not find a job. I was trying to find out what form of government could best provide economic justice.

Through a better understanding of the Bible and after some experience in the workplace, I gradually began to see that human greed, not an economic system, is the culprit. A poor person may envy the rich and strive to gain great wealth, but if he succeeds he discovers that he still wants more. One translation of Ecclesiastes 5:10 states it this way: "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income" (NIV).

Through the prophet Isaiah, God expressed His grief over what greed did to His people (Isa. 5:1-10). He loves justice, but He saw the rich oppress the poor. He loves righteousness, but He heard cries of distress from the lips of the wronged. And He pronounced judgment on the greedy who kept buying more and more with no concern for others.

Lord, give us thankful hearts that are content and willing to share what we have with those less fortunate. ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

I do not ask for treasures here,
To hoard, decay, and rust,
But for the better things of life—
Humility and trust.
—Meadows

Money is a good servant but a poor master.

Isaiah 5:9 In my ears the LORD of hosts *has sworn*, "Surely, many houses shall become desolate, *even* great and fine ones, without occupants:

- **In my ears:** Isa 22:14 Am 3:7
- Isa 5:6 27:10 Am 5:11 6:11 Mt 22:7 23:38
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

In my ears - Referring to Isaiah's ears. As Amos says...

Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7)

Surely - Oaths often begin with "Surely" thus the NAS addition of the words "has sworn" is probably correct.

LORD of hosts (see **Jehovah Sabaoth**) - This is God's name picturing Him as the sovereign commander of armies, a fitting description in light of the coming judgment.

Desolate (ruin, waste) - This Hebrew word refers to the desolation caused by some great disaster, usually a result of divine judgment (as in the present passage) and stresses the horror caused by the desolation of judgment. The mansions will no longer be occupied.

In Second Chronicles one of the reasons that the land was to be **desolate** for 70 years was because they had failed to allow the land to have its Sabbath rests every seventh year. In short, their 70 year exile in Babylon was...

to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah (Jer 25:12), until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath until seventy years were complete. (2Chr 36:21)

Jehovah prophesies the futility of adding **house to house**, for their mansions would become desolate and the land would become unproductive. God is not against wealth but He is interested in how we use what He gives us (Dt 8:18).

Isaiah 5:10 For ten acres of vineyard will yield only one bath of wine, and a homer of seed will yield but an ephah of grain

- Lev 27:16 Eze 45:10,11 Joel 1:17 Hag 1:9, 10, 11
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Here we see the covenant curses promised for disobedience...

You shall bring out **much seed** to the field but you will **gather in little**, for the locust will consume it. (Dt 28:38)

Ten acres - **NET Bible** notes that the word for acre is literally "yoke" which "here a unit of square measure. Apparently a ten-yoke vineyard covered the same amount of land it would take ten teams of oxen to plow in a certain period of time. The exact size is unknown."

Bath - A liquid measure, estimated at about 6 gallons (some sources list up to 12 gallons). Presumably one would expect **ten acres of vineyard** to yield far more than 6-12 gallons of wine. For comparison, in the California Napa Valley, one acre yields about 120 gallons of wine. Ten acres in the Napa Valley would be expected to yield about 1200 gallons of wine. Clearly **one bath of wine** is markedly less than would be expected by these rich land owners and reflects the degree of devastation by the Divine decree.

This marked reduction of production from the land is in striking contrast to the promised **Millennium** about which Isaiah recorded...

In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and **the fruit of the earth** will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. (Is 4:2)

Homer ("bushel") - A dry measure, equal to 10 ephahs.

Ephah - Another dry measure. What we see is that one **homer of seed** (10 ephahs) only yields one **ephah of grain**, far less than would be expected under normal growing conditions. Imagine the consternation of the farmers - a ratio of 10:1 - seed:grain!

James reminds us of the truth which Israel forgot and/or rejected...

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (James 1:17-note)

Motyer quips on the irony of divine justice noting that...

The land-hungry end by being hungry, despite all their land. (Ibid)

I do not ask for treasures here,
To hoard, decay, and rust,
But for the better things of life--
Humility and trust. --Meadows

Money is a good servant but a poor master.

Isaiah 5:11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them:

- **rise**: Isa 5:22 28:1 Pr 23:29,30 Ec 10:16,17 Ho 7:5,6 Hab 2:15 Lk 21:34 Ro 13:13 1Co 6:10 Ga 5:21 1Th 5:6,7
- **inflame**: or, pursue, Isa 28:7,8 Pr 20:1 23:32
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Woe - The second woe addresses the drunkard (Is 5:11-17; cf. Is 5:22; Is 19:14; Is 24:20; Is 28:1, 7).

Rise early - They wake up to **strong drink** and go to bed with **strong drink**. Alcohol is their "life blood", as likely their blood alcohol level would testify!

Pursue (radap) is a verb which means to chase after or hotly pursue as when Abraham pursued Lot's captors (Ge 14:14, 15). This verb was used of hunting after animals (1Sa 26:20). In the present context **radap** pictures men driven by their desire (and need ~ addiction) which causes them to chase after their next drink!

Strong drink (sekar) refers to an intoxicating beverage, usually thought to be some kind of beer.

Sekar is used 20x in the OT and 5x in Isaiah - Lev 10:9; Nu 6:3; 28:7; Deut 14:26; 29:6; Judg 13:4, 7, 14; 1 Sam 1:15; Ps 69:12; Prov 20:1; 31:4, 6; Isa 5:11, 22; 24:9; 28:7; 29:9; 56:12; Mic 2:11

Pursue strong drink - As seen in one who is fully addicted to alcohol!

Pr 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise. (see also Pr 23:29, 30, 31; Hab. 2:15, Ro 13:13, 1Co 6:9, 10)

Ryrie notes that

Such dissipation brings temporal punishment to nations (Is 5:13) and eternal punishment to individuals (Is 5:14)

NET Bible...

This verse does not condemn drinking per se, but refers to the carousing lifestyle of the rich bureaucrats, made possible by wealth taken from the poor. Their carousing is not the fundamental problem, but a disgusting symptom of the real disease – their social injustice.

Isaiah 5:12 Their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; but they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, nor do they consider the work of His hands:

- **the harp:** Isa 22:13 Ge 31:27 Job 21:11, 12, 13, 14 Da 5:1, 2, 3, 4,23 Amos 6:4, 5, 6 Lk 16:19 Jude 1:12
- **they regard:** Isa 5:19 Job 34:27 Ps 28:5 92:5,6 Ho 4:10,11
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Their banquets... by wine - They "party hardy" completely insensitive to Jehovah's impending judgment, "fiddling" like Nero did when Rome burned! Notice that **wine** "tops" off the party. No wine, no party!

SENSUAL PROFLIGACY "PARALYZES" SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

Their pleasure-filled living had made them blind to God. Notice that Isaiah clearly links the **pursuit of strong drink** (Is 5:11) with an insensitivity to the **deeds of the LORD**. (cp Eph 5:18-note)

They do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD ("the work of the Lord they do not look at") - In context the deeds they do not recognize are the indicators of God's imminent (from Latin word = "overhang", what a picture of) judgment (cp Dt 30:19, 20; Amos 3:2)

Smith has a pithy comment...

Sadly, this intoxicating behavior has dulled their observation of what God was doing in their world (Is 5:12b). What God did was not considered significant, and these divine acts were not understood as part of God's providential rule of the earth. They did not regard the economic and political changes that had already happened within their nation and on the international scene as designed and directed by God's plan for his people. They lacked spiritual perception, for they viewed political events as just the outworking of politicians, not as the hand of God. As Oswalt states, "When the passion for pleasure has become uppermost in a person's life, passion for God and his truth and his ways are squeezed out." Certainly the focus on pleasure and leisure activities in our day has the potential of doing the same thing. (Ibid)

The **psalmist** rightly declares...

Psalm 92:5 How great are Your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep. A senseless man has no

knowledge, nor does a stupid man understand this

Spurgeon comments:

O Lord, how great are thy works! He is lost in wonder. He utters an exclamation of amazement. How vast! How stupendous are the doings of Jehovah! Great for number, extent, and glory and design are all the creations of the Infinite One.

And thy thoughts are very deep. The Lord's plans are as marvellous as his acts; his designs are as profound as his doings are vast. Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it unsearchable. Some men think but cannot work, and others are mere drudges working without thought; in the Eternal the conception and the execution go together. Providence is inexhaustible, and the divine decrees which originate it are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planned it are infinite. Man is superficial, God is inscrutable; man is shallow, God is deep. Dive as we may we shall never fathom the mysterious plan, or exhaust the boundless wisdom of the all comprehending mind of the Lord. We stand by the fathomless sea of divine wisdom, and exclaim with holy awe, "O the depth!"

A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this. In this and the following verses the effect of the psalm is heightened by contrast; the shadows are thrown in to bring out the lights more prominently. What a stoop from the preceding verse; from the saint to the brute, from the worshipper to the boor, from the psalmist to the fool! Yet, alas, the character described here is no uncommon one. The boorish or boarish man, for such is almost the very Hebrew word, sees nothing in nature; and if it be pointed out to him, his foolish mind will not comprehend it. He may be a philosopher, and yet be such a brutish being that he will not own the existence of a Maker for the ten thousand matchless creations around him, which wear, even upon their surface, the evidences of profound design. The unbelieving heart, let it boast as it will, does not know; and with all its parade of intellect, it does not understand.

A man must either be a saint or a brute, he has no other choice; his type must be the adoring seraph, or the ungrateful swine. So far from paying respect to great thinkers who will not own the glory or being of God, we ought to regard them as comparable to the beasts which perish, only vastly lower than mere brutes, because their degrading condition is of their own choosing.

O God, how sorrowful a thing it is that men whom thou hast so largely gifted, and made in thine own image, should so brutify themselves that they will neither see nor understand what thou hast made so clear. Well might an eccentric writer say, "God made man a little lower than the angels at first, and he has been trying to get lower ever since."

Nor... consider the work of His hands - "Culpable negligence constantly persisted in, losing much blessing, and involving terrible condemnation." (Spurgeon)

Psalm 28:5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD, nor the **deeds** of **His hands**, He will tear them down and not build them up.

Spurgeon comments:

Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands God works in creation -- nature teems with proofs of His wisdom and goodness, yet purblind (dim-witted) atheists refuse to see Him: He works in providence, ruling and overruling, and His hand is very manifest in human history, yet the infidel will not discern Him: He works in grace -- remarkable conversions are still met with on all hands, yet the ungodly refuse to see the operations of the LORD.

**Where angels wonder, carnal men despise!
God condescends to teach, and man refuses to learn.**

He will tear them down: He will make them "behold, and wonder, and perish." If they would not see the hand of judgment upon others, they shall feel it upon themselves. Both soul and body shall be overwhelmed with utter destruction for ever and ever.

And not build them up. God's cure is positive and negative; His sword has two edges, and cuts right and left. Their heritage of evil shall prevent the ungodly receiving any good; the **ephah** shall be too full of wrath to contain a grain of hope. They have become like old, rotten, decayed houses of timber, useless to the owner, and harboring all manner of evil, and, therefore, the **Great Builder** will demolish them utterly. Incurable offenders (Ed: An apt description of His "**Vineyard**") may expect speedy destruction: they who will not mend, shall be thrown away as worthless.

**Let us be very attentive to all the lessons of God's word and work,
lest being found disobedient to the divine will,
we be made to suffer the divine wrath.**

Isaiah 5:13 Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude is parched with thirst:

- **people:** Isa 1:7 42:22, 23, 24, 25 2Ki 17:6 2Ch 28:5, 6, 7, 8
- **For:** Isa 1:3 27:11 Jer 8:7 Ho 4:6 Mt 23:16-27 Lk 19:44 Jn 3:19,20 Ro 1:28 2Pe 3:5)
- **honorable men are famished** = Jer 14:18 La 4:4,5,9
- **multitude:** Jer 14:3 Am 8:13
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Isaiah momentarily stops listing the woes and gives two predictions in Isa 5:13,14.

Therefore - A term of conclusion (cp second term of conclusion in Is 5:14). In Is 5:12 he has just described the effect of **strong drink** in inducing a spiritual stupor regarding God's Ways and Word. Here he draws out the logical conclusion of such spiritual insensitivity - first, **lack of knowledge** and second, an explicable **exile**.

My people - NAS capitalizes "My" assuming that it is Jehovah speaking, not Isaiah, but it is not completely clear in this verse.

My people go - Not "will go" but spoken of this future event as if it was already occurring ("destined to go") or had been completed, so sure was Jehovah's Word of judgment.

Into exile - To Assyria as described in 2Ki 17:6 in 722BC. To Babylon in 605, 597, 586BC. Recall that Isaiah is prophesying between 740-680BC.

Their lack of knowledge - Obviously not speaking of "knowledge" in general but specifically the knowledge of the Ways and Word of Jehovah.

Jesus alluded to a similar "gap" in the "spiritual knowledge" of the first century Jews...

saying, "**If you had known in this day** (cp Is 59:8), even you, the things which make for peace (cp Lk 1:77, 78, 79, Ac 10:36, Ep 2:14-note, Ep 2:17-note, Jn 14:27, 16:33)! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. (Lk 19:42)

Later in the prophecy of **Isaiah** we read the critique that...

they are **not a people of discernment** (knowledge superior to mere gathering of data, cp Is 1:3), therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them. and their Creator will not be gracious to them." (Isa 27:11)

Other **OT prophets** level a similar charge (cp Jesus' "staccato" series of scathing woes against the hypocritical Pharisees = Mt 23:16-28)...

Jeremiah 8:7 "Even the stork in the sky Knows her seasons; and the turtledove and the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration; but **My people do not know the ordinance** of the LORD.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for **lack of knowledge** (experiential knowledge of the living God. To know God is to live in harmony with His will = obedience to His illuminated Word. Loss of the knowledge of God leaves a destructive vacuum in personal and national life). Because you have **rejected knowledge**, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have **forgotten the law** of your God, I also will forget your children.

Comment: At risk of sounding judgmental it seems that the church in America has forgotten that this same Word is to not just make us "smarter sinners" but is to be used as a "mirror" to allow self-examination (Jas 1:24-note, Jas 1:25-note) that we might be more like the Savior!

Sir Isaac Newton spoke to the root cause of Israel's **lack of knowledge** - Certainly no one could say that he was not an intellectual or that he was not a man of remarkable ability. One day someone said this to him:

Sir Isaac, I do not understand. You seem to be able to believe the Bible like a little child. I have tried but I cannot. So many of its statements mean nothing to me. I cannot believe; I cannot understand.

Newton replied...

Sometimes I come into my study and in my absentmindedness I attempt to light my candle when the extinguisher is over it, and I fumble about trying to light it and cannot; but when I remove the extinguisher then I am able to light the candle. **I am afraid the extinguisher in your case is the love of your sins; it is deliberate unbelief that is in you** (This was problem with all of Israel except the **remnant**). Turn to God in repentance; be prepared to let the Spirit of God reveal His truth to you, and it will be His joy to show the glory of the grace of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ."

In the NT, **Jesus** in the context of their spiritual ignorance (see Lk 19:42 above) warned of impending disaster upon Jerusalem...

they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because **you did not recognize** the time of your visitation (They failed to recognize their Messiah's first "**visitation**"!). (Luke 19:44) (This prophecy was fulfilled in 70AD when the Romans under General Titus defeated Israel, sacked the Temple and leveled Jerusalem)

Paul echoes this charge against all humanity declaring that...

they **did not see fit to acknowledge God** any longer, (so) God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper (Ro 1:28)

Earlier **Jehovah** had declared that...

An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but **Israel does not know, My people do not understand**. (Isaiah 1:3-note)

Honorable men are famished (Literally "Their glory are men of hunger") - The rich will not escape divine retribution!

Isaiah 5:14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure; And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry and the jubilant within her, descend into it:

- **Sheol:** Isa 14:9 30:33 Ps 49:14 Pr 27:20 Eze 32:18-30 Hab 2:5 Mt 7:13 Rev 20:13-15
- **enlarged:** Nu 16:30-34 Pr 1:12
- **jubilant:** Isa 21:4 1Sa 25:36-38 2Sa 13:28,29 Ps 55:15 Da 5:3-6,30 Na 1:10 Lk 12:19,20 16:20-23 17:27 21:34 Ac 12:21-23
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Therefore - Second successive term of conclusion, and oh what a divine conclusion! The party is over!

Sheol ([see note](#)) - the underworld, the abode of the dead, not a state of unconsciousness. In context **Sheol** stands for death, personified as a devouring enemy who was about to open its mouth wide and swallow up the revelers. In other words, **Sheol** the place of the dead spirits will develop a ravenous appetite which is ironic because the very ones consumed are those who had an insatiable appetite for consumption of wine and food (Is 5:11, 12)!

Enlarged its throat - "'will make wide its throat" which is utter divine irony, for these victims of the abysmal insatiability of Sheol had themselves made wide their throats, living to gratify their insatiable **fleshly** appetites.

Paul describes **the end** of those whose "**belly**" is their "**god**" declaring that...

end is destruction (**apoleia**), whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame (**aischune**), who set their minds (**phroneo** in the = continually. The habit of their life is live for the temporal in lieu of the eternal!) on earthly things. (Php 3:19-note)

Without measure - "Without limit"

NET Bible notes that...

Death is portrayed in both the OT (Pr 1:12; Hab 2:5) and Canaanite myth as voraciously swallowing up its prey. In the myths Death is portrayed as having "a lip to the earth, a lip to the heavens... and a tongue to the stars." (G. R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, 69, text 5 ii 2-3.) Death describes his own appetite as follows: "But my appetite is the appetite of lions in the waste... If it is in very truth my desire to consume 'clay' [a reference to his human victims], then in truth by the handfuls I must eat it, whether my seven portions

[indicating fullness and completeness] are already in the bowl or whether Nahar [the god of the river responsible for ferrying victims from the land of the living to the land of the dead] has to mix the cup." (Driver, 68-69, text 5 i 14-22).

Isaiah 5:15 So the common man will be humbled and the man of importance abased, The eyes of the proud also will be abased:

- **the common:** Isa 2:9,11,17 9:14-17 24:2-4 Ps 62:9 Jer 5:4,5,9 Jas 1:9-11 Rev 6:15,16
- **the eyes:** Isa 10:12 13:11 37:23,29 Ex 9:17 Job 40:11,12 Da 4:37 1Pe 5:5
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The Hebrew is identical to the first part of Isaiah 2:9...

So the common man has been humbled and the man of importance has been abased, but do not forgive them.
(Is 2:9a)

Common man ('adam)... **man of importance abased** - The ultimate end of the judgment is utter humiliation of sinful men and (in the next verse) exaltation of Jehovah, which has always been God's primary purpose for mankind (cp "glorify God and enjoy Him forever"). Since they were arrogant, God would remove those things that made them so arrogant.

Humbled ([07817](#)) (**shachach/sahah**) (Is 2:9-note, Is 2:11-note.), (Is 2:17-note)) means to be bowed down, prostrated, humbled which is the sense in this passage. It can also mean to bow in homage (Pr 14:19), to bow (as a mourner Ps 35:14, 38:7), to crouch (as a wild beast, Job 38:40). Later in Isaiah shachach is used of laying low a city or city walls (Is 25:12, 26:5).

Abased ([08213](#)) (shaphel/sapal [word study]) (Frequent in Isaiah - Is 2:9, 11, 12, 17; 5:15; 10:33; 13:11; 25:11, 12; 26:5; 29:4; 32:19; 40:4; 57:9) conveys the basic sense of to be low physically, which leads to the more important figurative meanings of abasement, humbling, humility

The eyes - Why the eyes? What this man looks at is what he desires (cp Ge 39:7, Ps 123:2), which refers back to the covetousness of Isa 5:8 (**add house to house**).

Proud... abased - God is eternally, irrevocably opposed to the proud. It is only the humble who can receive His grace. (cp Jas 4:6-note)

Isaiah 5:16 But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness:

- **Lord:** Isa 12:4 1Ch 29:11 Ps 9:16 21:13 46:10 Eze 28:22 38:23 Ro 2:5 Rev 19:1-5
- **God... holy:** Isa 6:3 57:15 Rev 3:7 4:8 15:3,4
- **righteousness:** Isa 8:13 29:23 Lev 10:3 Eze 36:23 1Pe 1:16 2:15
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Holy - Separated, belonging to another order, in this case a divine order (cp Isa 6:3).

Will show Himself holy in righteousness - In judgment against His own unjust people, the **holy God** shows His justice because His actions are fair and just. God reveals His holiness through His righteous acts, which on the one hand bring salvation for His righteous people but judgment on a selfish, oppressive people. When God judges evildoers as they deserve, his sovereignty will be acknowledged and His Name will be exalted.

Compare the mention of **judgment** (mishpat) and **righteousness** (tsedaqah) in Isa 5:7. The NET Bible says that in Isaiah 5:7...

God denounces His people for failing to produce a society where **justice** and **fairness** are valued and maintained. God will judge His people for their failure, taking "justice" and "fairness" into His own hands

Isaiah 5: 17 Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture, and strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy

- **lambs will graze:** Isa 7:21,22,25 17:2 32:14 40:11 65:10 Zep 2:6,14

- **strangers:** Isa 1:7 Dt 28:33 Ne 9:37 La 5:2 Ho 8:7 Lk 21:24
- **waste:** Isa 10:16 Dt 32:15 Ps 17:10,14 73:7 119:70 Jer 5:28 Am 4:1-3
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then - The scene of judgment is succeeded by a scene of seeming peace. In fact the point is that following the disappearance of the carousers, only sheep would be left to graze on the ruins of the wealthy.

Motyer writes that...

the flocks are roaming free among the ruins of a prosperity devastated by divine judgment. The animals have made the formerly well-tended lawns their own, and (lit.) 'tramps eat in the ruins of the well-fed' (Ibid)

NET Bible notes that...

The image completes the picture begun in Isa 5:14 and adds to the irony. When judgment comes, Sheol will eat up the sinners who frequent the feasts; then the banqueting halls will lie in ruins and only sheep will eat there.

Isaiah 5:18 Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, and sin as if with cart ropes

- Jer 5:31 8:5, 6, 7, 8, 9 23:10,14,24 28:15,16 44:15-19 Eze 13:10,11,22 Zep 1:12 Joh 16:2 Ac 26:9
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Woe - Number three is directed to their defiant attitude and deep attachment to their iniquity and sin.

Iniquity... sin - Each is pictured as a heavy load which brings bondage.

Drag iniquity... and sin - Literally the Hebrew reads "those who pull evil with the ropes of emptiness, and, as [with] ropes of a cart, sin". Sin is deceptive and attractive. In one sense they held fast to their sin (drag iniquity) and it held them fast in sin (cp Pr 5:21)

Ropes ('aboth) refers to ropes formed to be strong for binding prisoners (Jdg 15:13, 14; 16:11, 12).

Vine comments that...

The figure is that of beasts of burden roped to a wagon. Iniquity was the burden they dragged by their vain delusions, and sin the wagon to which they were roped.

What a picture this verse presents, the **NET Bible** commenting that...

The sinners are so attached to their sinful ways (compared here to a heavy load) that they strain to drag them along behind them.

Raymond Ortlund has a pithy application point...

Picture people, not horses, harnessed to a heavy wagon, pulling it along, straining with all their might. Isaiah understands the burden that sin is. But we do it to ourselves! Why? Because sin is deceitful. The prophet says, "**Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood.**" That's how it happens. **Sin lies to us. It's not as though sin fulfills its promises to make life better. It's a drag.** So why don't we throw off the harnesses and run free? Because we are deceived—doubly so, for even as we cling to our favorite sins, so heavy but so dear to us, we also wonder, "I'm so bored. I'm so disappointed. Why isn't God more real to me? And look at the condition of this whole wretched world. Where is God?" That is what Isaiah discerns in the human heart, according to Isa 5:19—a mind that blames God, defies God, taunts God. Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners. ([Isaiah - God Saves Sinners Preaching the Word](#)) (Color and bolding added)

Isaiah 5: 19 Who say, "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may know it!:"

- **Let him:** Isa 66:5 Jer 5:12,13 17:15 Eze 12:22,27 Am 5:18,19 2Pe 3:3,4)(let the: Isa 30:11 Jer 23:18,36
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

(Isa 5:19NLT) They even mock the Holy One of Israel and say, "Hurry up and do something! Quick, show us what you can do. We want to see what you have planned."

Let Him make speed - They are brazenly challenging, even blasphemously taunting, God to act in judgment if He can (cp Isa 5:12)! Woe! Arrogant. Ignorant. Doomed!

They are **mocking God**, which Paul says always brings a "payday"...

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal 6:7, 8)

And let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near- It is amazing that they can utter His glorious Name "Holy One" with such abandon. This is foolish pride calling on God to prove Himself! They may have called Him **Holy One** but their unholy behavior revealed their true heart attitude toward Him. These ancient scoffers were similar our modern brand of God skeptics who speak lightly and lowly of the Living Lord and laughingly go on their way, thinking they will never have to give an account to Him! Isaiah would have one word for such foolish and despicable anti-God types like HBO's Bill Maher - **Woe!**

Holy One - 58x in 56v (29x in Isaiah!) - 2 Kgs 19:22; Job 6:10; Ps 16:10; 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; 106:16; Prov 9:10; 30:3; Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Ezek 39:7; Dan 4:13, 23; 8:13; Hos 11:9, 12; Hab 1:12; 3:3; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69; Acts 2:27; 13:35; 1 Pet 1:15; 1 John 2:20; Rev 16:5

Smith comments that...

This is how they reason: If there is no all-powerful God controlling this world and if there is no holy God who sets absolute standards of just behavior, then there is no need for us to change our ways. (Ibid)

They go from bad to worse later, for **Isaiah** records...

For this is a **rebellious** people, **false** sons, sons who **refuse** to listen to the instruction of the LORD; who say to the seers, "You must not see visions"; and to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, **let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.** (Isaiah 30:9, 10, 11) (**Comment:** God's man who proclaims His Word is charged with the job to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable, this latter by leading the hearers to a face to face encounter with the morally pure and awesomely holy God. The glory and light of His holiness exposes our sinfulness! Sadly, too often the reaction is to shut down the preacher and call for a new pastor who is skilled at tickling ears rather than convicting hearts! Woe! cp 2Ti 4:3,4-note)

That we may see it... that we may know it - They saw no evidence that God was about to bring judgment. They claim they must see it before they will believe it. The ultimate condemnation is that because they possessed the Word of God, they should have known. Rejection of greater light always brings greater judgment.

Those who should have warned failed to do so, **Jeremiah** recording that...

They have lied about the LORD And said, "Not He; Misfortune will not come on us, And we will not see sword or famine. The prophets are as wind, And the word is not in them. Thus it will be done to them!" (Jer 5:12, 13)

Look, they keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it come now!" (Jer 17:15)

Ezekiel records a similar self-deception (the effect of being entangled with the cords of sin) and this one by people who have already been defeated at least once by Nebuchadnezzar (!)...

Son of man (Ezekiel), behold, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies of times far off.' (Ezekiel 12:27)

And we who live in the last of the last days eagerly awaiting the return of our Bridegroom are hearing the very words foretold by **Peter**...

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "**Where is the promise of His coming?** For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation (Wrong! What about the flood? Sodom and Gomorrah? They try to paint these as "myth"! cp 2Pe 3:5,6-note; 2Pe 2:6-note, Jude 1:7)." (2Pe 3:3,4-note)

Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!:

- **Woe to them:** Pr 17:15 Mal 2:17 3:15 Mt 6:23 15:3-6 23:16-23 Lk 11:35 16:15 2Ti 3:1-5 2Pe 2:1,18,19
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

VALUE REVERSAL

Woe - Number four is directed at the "moral relativists" of the day, who perverted moral standards. Oh, how true believers need to be burdened to plead for the heart and soul of America (cp Jdg 21:25, 2Chr 7:13, 14), where right is now called wrong, and wrong is now called right! Why? Such an inversion of God's principles for a blessed life, allows the ungodly to carry out all manner of unrighteous behavior and to be "justified" in their wicked actions and even to "feel good" about themselves ("I did it my way!") Beloved, God is not mocked and the seeds of evil being sown in America today will reap evil tomorrow unless God sends a revival of righteousness (Gal 6:7, 8, Hos 8:7) And one does not have to be a prophet to draw this conclusion!

Call evil good - Reversing God's standards of right and wrong characterizes times of apostasy and precedes times of divine judgment. This phenomenon is increasingly characteristic of Christendom today. These verses paint a perfect picture of the "modern morality" with its glossing over of evil, and its re-dressing of wickedness to give it the appearance of righteousness. This insensitivity to moral decay is the sign of deepest corruption.

"Light" and "darkness" are symbols for "good" and "evil" (1Sa 2:9; 2 Sa22:29; Job 29:3; Ps112:4; Pr2:13; Ac26:18; Ro13:12).

Smith comments that...

Without the divine standards of God, a good thing can be reinterpreted as something evil, while an immoral act (killing someone with cancer) can be twisted into something that actually appears to be good (a merciful termination of their pain). Without an absolute standard of divine justice, false human reasoning and uncontrolled passion can rationalize and justify almost any act, particularly if the primary criteria is "Will it benefit me?" When sweet and bitter, light and darkness, and good and evil are relative values based on wishes, whims, and selfish ends, righteousness and justice do not exist. Much of the crime and immorality that afflicts modern society goes right back to similar personal and societal redefinitions of right and wrong. (Ibid)

Darkness... bitter - Mixed metaphors (sight and taste) that picture evil.

Light... sweet - Direct antonyms of the preceding metaphors, here symbolizing righteousness (what is right before God and then before man).

Warren Wiersbe comments that Israel's God ordained...

Moral standards were destroyed by new definitions of sin (see Amos 5:7), people using God's vocabulary but not His dictionary. Like today's "**doublespeak**," this kind of language made it easy to **deceive people** and **avoid a guilty conscience**. In today's world, increased taxes are "revenue enhancements," and poor people are "fiscal underachievers."... The Jerusalem Bible translation of Psalm 12:2 says it perfectly: "All they do is lie to one another, flattering lips, talk from a double heart." ([Be Comforted - Isaiah- Feeling Secure in the Arms of God](#))

Related Resource:

- [Joe Guglielmo - Isaiah 5:20 Moral Relativism](#)

Misnomers - A newspaper columnist expressed astonishment at the way truth is often stretched in advertising. She recalled ordering "fresh fruit salad" from the menu in a Boston restaurant. But when the item was served, it was anything but "fresh." The peaches, pineapples, grapes, and maraschino cherries had spent months wallowing in their own juice in a tin can. When the waitress was asked what happened to the "fresh" fruit salad, she responded cheerily, "Oh, honey, that's just what they call it."

Such deception occurs not only in advertising; it happens whenever people move away from God's principles of truth and goodness. Deception, misnomers (the use of a wrong name), and outright lies are the tools of an immoral person's trade. Selfish and evil people call themselves generous and good. The slaves of sin call themselves liberated. The foolish call themselves enlightened. And the lustful describe their acts as love affairs.

God is not fooled by these misnomers. In Isaiah 5:20, He warned against those who "call evil good, and good evil." No matter what the world calls good or evil, let's take our definition from the God of all truth. With Him there are no misnomers. — Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Deceptions, twists, and outright lies
Define the words of fools;
But those who know God's Word will have
A life where wisdom rules. —Sper

**We would not delight in sin
if we were not deceived by sin.**

Calling Evil Good - Dennis Fisher - The Wizard of Oz has remained popular for years. People of all ages have learned moral lessons from Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion as they traveled down the yellow brick road. Of course, in the plot line the great enemy to be overcome is the Wicked Witch of the West. Evil is clearly depicted and overcome by good.

A new Broadway musical, however, turns the moral sense of the original story on its head. In this rewriting of the story, the wicked witch is presented as a sympathetic character. Born with green skin, she feels like an outsider. Major characters, plot lines, roles, and other details are altered so that the wicked witch is really just a misunderstood person. The audience might come away with the idea that evil is good and good is evil.

During the ministry of the prophet Isaiah, a reversal of moral values took place in Israel. Some actually lifted up the evils of murder, idolatry, and adultery as good. In response, Isaiah gave a stern warning: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil!" (Isa. 5:20). In our relativistic world, popular culture constantly challenges biblical values. But studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word can ensure our discernment between good and evil. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

In our day-to-day existence,
Evil sometimes wears a mask;
Trust the Lord for true discernment—
He gives wisdom when we ask.
—Hess

**If we know the truth,
we can discern what's false.**

Rearranging the Price Tags - The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard tells a parable of a man who broke into a department store one night. Rather than stealing merchandise, he rearranged the price tags on many items. The next morning the clerks and customers found one surprise after another: diamond necklaces for a dollar and cheap costume jewelry costing thousands.

In Isaiah's day, Israel had rejected and despised God's instructions (Is. 5:24). The people grossly underestimated faith in Him and the value of His laws. They cheapened the worth of patiently waiting on the Lord to work out His purposes (Is 5:18-19). They devalued virtue and inflated evil (Is 5:20). They overpriced their own wisdom and cleverness (Is 5:21) and made heroes of heavy drinkers (Is 5:22). Bribery routinely subverted justice (Is 5:23). God had created a climate where goodness could flourish (Is 5:1-2), but His people had cultivated weeds and produced moral confusion.

Does this sound up-to-date? Our society is doing just what Israel did centuries ago. What a challenge to the church! May we who know Christ as our Savior show our world by how we live the true value of goodness, righteousness, justice, sobriety, wisdom, and purity.— Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

This strife-torn world, so wracked by sin,
So deep in desperate need,
Must see firsthand the love of Christ
From Christians who will lead. —DJD

The best way to fight evil is to live for Christ.

When Evil Is Good - In the early 1970s, political cartoonist Wayne Stayskal illustrated an age-old problem. In the first of three pictures, a father and his son are watching a violent television show together. From the tube blares the words: "Bang! Bang! Kill! Stab! Boom! Zap! Rat-a-tat-tat! Murder!"

In the second picture a news bulletin interrupts the program: "And now news from Vietnam." The TV shows scenes of mutilated bodies of Vietnamese children, some in their mothers' arms. The father is aghast as he shields the boy's eyes with his hands. "What are they showing that stuff on TV for!" he yells.

Stayskal raises a vital issue. How can we entertain ourselves with fictional scenes that glorify violence but be horrified when watching the real thing? Hollywood began asking the same question after the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001. They postponed the release of some films with terrorist themes. But how long will such restraint last?

Sin is so dangerous because it is blind to itself. The prophet Isaiah said that God's people were redefining good and evil. Incredible! But people are still doing it in the 21st century. Only God's Word can safeguard any of us from calling "evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). — Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, correct my vision,
So dim and warped by sin,
That through Your Spirit's blessing
Your truth may shine within. —Bosch

Isaiah 5:21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight:

- Job 11:12 Pr 3:7 26:12,16 Jn 9:41 Ro 1:22 11:25 12:16 1Co 3:18-20
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Woe - Number five is directed at the the conceited man and at his insistence for "his rights" rather than God's rights!

Wise in their own eyes - But not in God's eyes! Self-flattering fools! Exaggerated egos! Excessive personal pride! They have a lofty appreciation of their own wisdom and cleverness.

They think they are wise enough to handle any situation. They reject a humble dependence on the wisdom of God. They want to be in control of their behavior.

Listen to one modern thinker's foolish pronouncement regarding conceit...

As for conceit, what man will do any good who is not conceited? Nobody holds a good opinion of a man who has a low opinion of himself! (Anthony Trollope - Orley Farm)

The opposite characteristic is seen in Mt 5:3 (note), "**poor in spirit**", about which **J C Ryle** writes...

The Lord Jesus calls "blessed" those who are poor in spirit (verse 3). He means the humble, and lowly-minded, and self-abased; he means those who are deeply convinced of their own sinfulness in God's sight: these are people who are not "wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight" (Isaiah 5:21).

Parallelism - In Isaiah - same thought repeated in different verse with different words.

Wise in their own eyes - This is the root of sin and leads to a decrement in one's estimate of the Most High God which in turn manifests itself in a gradual decline of personal purity as Paul explains in Romans 1...

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over (**Ed**: Even as He gave Israel over to her enemies) in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. (Ro 1:22, 23-note, Ro 1:24-note; 1Co 1:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,25)

Solomon the wisest man who ever lived warned...

Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. (Pr 3:7)

Comment: Such wisdom is folly and self-delusion! This is another way of telling us not to lean on our own understanding (Pr 3:5b). The NJB says "Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom." Real wisdom begins with a healthy, holy fear of Jehovah! (Pr 9:10, Job 28:28, Ps 111:10) And note that when saints fear God, saints flee sin!

Spurgeon commenting on Ps 111:10 ([note](#)) says "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. It is its first principle, but it is also its head and chief attainment. The word "beginning" in Scripture sometimes means the chief; and true religion is at once the first element of wisdom, and its chief fruit. To know God so as to walk aright before Him is the greatest of all the applied sciences. Holy reverence of God leads us to praise Him, and this is the point which the psalm drives at, for it is a wise act on the part of a creature towards his Creator."

The **NET Bible** has an interesting note observing that...

Isa 5:18, 19, 20, 21 contain three "woe-sayings" that are purely accusatory and have no formal announcement of judgment attached (as in the "woe-sayings" recorded in Is 5:8-17). While this lack of symmetry is odd, it has a clear rhetorical purpose. Having established a pattern in Is 5:8-17, the prophet deviates from it in Isa 5:18-21 to grab his audience's attention. By placing the "woes" in rapid succession and heaping up the accusatory elements, he highlights the people's guilt and introduces an element of tension and anticipation. One is reasonably certain that judgment will come, and when it does, it will be devastating. This anticipated devastation is described in frightening detail after the sixth and final woe (see Isa 5:22-30).

The venerable expositor **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** has this note that relates to **wise in (one's) own eyes**...

Sin is very clever; it always brings forward its reasons, its arguments. Sin knows us so well; it knows that we like to think of ourselves as highly intelligent people. So it does not just tell us, "Do this"; it gives us reasons for doing it, and they appear to be so wonderful. But the whole point is that in reality they are specious; they are empty and foolish. The reasoning is always false reasoning. The arguments are always wrong. (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, A Nation Under Wrath: Studies in Isaiah 5)

Isaiah 5:22 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink

- Isa 5:11 28:1-3,7 Pr 23:19,20 Hab 2:15
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Woe - Number six is leveled against drunkards (Isa 5:22, 23, 24, 25).

Heroes... valiant - Divine sarcasm! They may be **heroes** (valiant warriors, champions) and **valiant** (speaks of strength, might) when it comes to sin (**drinking**), but will fall woefully short when the Judge brings about the enemy invasion. Party hard. Die easy.

Isaiah 5:23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right

- **justify:** Ex 23:6-9 Pr 17:15 24:24 31:4,5
- **bride:** Isa 1:23 Dt 16:19 2Ch 19:7 Pr 17:23 Mic 3:11 7:3
- **take:** Isa 10:2 1Ki 21:13 Ps 94:21 Mt 23:35 27:24,25 Jas 5:6
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Who justify the wicked for a bribe - This verse continues the "woe" from Is 5:22. This speaks of a corrupt legal system, wherein the guilty are set free and the innocent are punished.

Rich Cathers offers a pithy summation of these 6 woes as 6 "stinkberries"...

Stinkberry #1 = greed (Is 5:8)

Stinkberry #2 = drunkenness (Is 5:11)

Stinkberry #3 = bondage to sin. (Is 5:18)

Stinkberry #4 = Redefining evil (Is 5:20)

Stinkberry #5 = Intellectual pride. (Is 5:21)

Stinkberry #6 = drunken judges. (Is 5:23)

Isaiah 5:24 Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel:

- **consumes:** Isa 47:14 Ex 15:7 Joe 2:5 Na 1:10 Mal 4:1 1Co 3:12,13)(Mt 3:12 Lk 3:17
- **their root:** Isa 9:14-17 Job 18:16 Ho 9:16 Am 2:9
- **rejected:** 1Sa 15:23,26 2Ki 17:14,15 Ne 9:26 Ps 50:17 Jer 6:19 8:9 Lk 7:30 Jn 12:48 Heb 10:28,29
- **despised:** Isa 30:12 2Sa 12:9,10 Lk 10:16 Ac 13:41 1Th 4:8
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE ROOT PROBLEM

Tongue of fire - A flame shaped like a tongue.

Stubble and dry grass - Both are very flammable and just as they are easily consumed by **fire**, so too God would bring sudden, complete, and severe judgment.

Root... rot... blossom... blown - Divine poetic justice indeed!

Jamieson writes that **root... blossom** speak of...

entire decay, both the hidden source and outward manifestations of prosperity, perishing (Job 18:16 Mal 4:1).

Rejected... despised - This verse depicts the root of Judah's moral depravity -- rejection and contempt for the Holy One of Israel and His Holy Word. While God had delighted in His people (Is 5:7), they did not delight in His Word, which is tantamount to not delighting in Him.

THOUGHT - Beloved, how can one say "I love God" and not at the same time love His Word, which reveals His awesome and pure holy character? Are you "delighting" in His Word? Does not our paucity of time allocated to God's Word show that we are to some degree despising and rejecting it?

Rejection of God's word cost **Saul** dearly...

For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because **you have rejected the word of Jehovah**, He has also rejected you from being king... But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for **you have rejected the word of Jehovah**, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." (1Sa 15:23, 26)

Rejection can take the form of refusing to listen to the Word...

However, they **did not listen**, but **stiffened their neck** like their fathers, who **did not believe** in the LORD their God. They **rejected** His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. (Ed: Our soul abhors a spiritual vacuum and if not filled with His Word, it will wander into the ways of the world) And they followed vanity (eg, vain idols) and became vain, and went after the nations (Gentiles) which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. (2Ki 17:14, 15)

Jeremiah brought a similar charge against God's people...

Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their plans, because they have **not listened** to My words, and as for My law, they have **rejected** it also. (Jeremiah 6:19)

The wise men (Who are in effect very foolish) are put to shame, they are dismayed and caught. Behold, they have **rejected the word** of the Lord, and what kind of wisdom do they have? (Jeremiah 8:9)

Isaiah 5:25 On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people, and He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the

streets. For all this His anger is not spent, but His hand is still stretched out :

- **anger:** Dt 31:17 32:19, 20, 21, 22 2Ki 13:3 22:13, 14, 15, 16, 17 2Ch 36:16 Ps 106:40 La 2:1, 2, 3 5:22 1Th 2:16
- **stretched:** Isa 14:26,27
- **mountains:** Ps 18:7 68:8 77:18 114:7 Jer 4:24 Mic 1:4 Na 1:5 Hab 3:10 Rev 20:11
- **refuse:** 1Ki 14:11 16:4 21:24 2Ki 9:37 Ps 83:10 Jer 8:2 9:22 15:3 16:4 Zeph 1:17
- **For all:** Isa 9:12,13,17,21 10:4 Lev 26:14-46 Ps 78:38 Da 9:16 Ho 14:4
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

On this account - What account? Because they **rejected the law** and **despised the word!**

The anger of the LORD has burned - God's anger burning is a frightening metaphor, one that is frequently repeated in Isaiah (Is 5:25, 13:9, 13, 30:27).

Anger... has burned... has stretched - The tenses could refer to past actions or future certainties.

The mountains quaked and their corpses lay like refuse - The plain sense interpretation of this passage is a literal earthquake with literal corpses in the streets.

Corpses... refuse - Suggests rotting from decay as they lay out in the open.

His anger is not spent - As devastating as this picture is, it is only "Act 1" so to speak of their desolation. This reminds one of the passage in Hebrews which declares...

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:31)

His hand is still stretched out - This anthropomorphism describing God's **hand** is frequently used by Isaiah to picture of God's power and authority. (see Isa 5:25, 9:12, 17, 21, 10:21, 14:26, 27, 31:3)

Smith rightly observes that...

God's almighty hand accomplishes on earth the satisfaction of God's burning anger by justly delivering recompense for sinful rebellion against God (cf. Amos 8:3 for similar dead bodies). Certainly God's character has not changed since the days of Amos and Isaiah, and his hatred of sins has not diminished. Every person who despises what God reveals in Scripture should stop and pay attention to God's just ways of dealing with sin. It is a fearful thing to be caught by the outstretched hands of an angry Almighty God. (Ibid)

Isaiah 5:26 He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, and will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; and behold, it will come with speed swiftly:

- **he will** (KJV): Isa 11:12 18:3 Jer 51:27
- **whistle:** Isa 7:18 Zec 10:8
- **end:** Isa 39:3 Dt 28:49 Ps 72:8 Jer 5:15 Mal 1:11
- **they:** Isa 30:16 Jer 4:13 La 4:19 Joe 2:7 Hab 1:8

Lift up a standard... and... whistle - All God has to do is "whistle" and the nations are at his beck and call! What a picture of God's sovereign control over the nations of the world.

A standard - This describes a conspicuous object (as a banner) carried at the top of a pole and used to mark a rallying point especially in battle. People would rally together around a **standard** for various purposes, one of the most important being the gathering of troops for war. God lifts up the standard so the troops can gather for their assault on Judah and Jerusalem. The protector of Judah oversees the destruction of His vineyard!

Lift up a standard... will whistle (cp Is 7:18) - Behind the nations is the sovereign Lord of history who moves the nations at His will. The Most High God is over all men and all nations and is able to use the nations to do His bidding, in this case using the pagan nation of **Babylon** to judge Judah.

In around 1450-1410BC, some 800 years before the prophecy was fulfilled, **Moses** described (without mentioning their name) the Babylonian invasion of Israel...

The LORD **will** bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who shall have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. (Dt 28:49, 50) (**Comment:** Notice Who is in control -see the "**will's**" in this verse and the one below!)

Years after Isaiah's prophecy, **Jehovah** specifically identified the invaders...

I will send to **Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant**, and **will** bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants, and against all these nations round about; and **I will** utterly destroy them, and make them a horror, and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. (Jer 25:9)

Isaiah 5:27 No one in it is weary or stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps; nor is the belt at its waist undone, Nor its sandal strap broken:

- **No one:** Joel 2:7,8
- **None:** Isa 11:5 45:1,5 1Ki 2:5 Job 12:18,21Ps 18:32 93:1 Da 5:6 Eph 6:13,14
- Dt 32:25
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

No one in it is weary or stumbles - He is describing the nation that invades Israel. The enemy nation will not fail physically. Equipment failure will not occur. This is not a rag-tag army! The point is that they will succeed.

Isaiah 5:28 Its arrows are sharp and all its bows are bent; the hoofs of its horses seem like flint and its chariot wheels like a whirlwind:

- **arrows:** Ps 45:5 120:4 Jer 5:16 Eze 21:9-11
- **horses:** Jdg 5:22 Jer 47:3 Mic 4:13 Na 2:3,4 3:2
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Arrow are sharp... bows are bent - Continues the picture of an enemy well equipped for battle with no weak spots.

Like flint (Flint - 3x in OT - Ex 4:25, Is 5:28, Ezek 3:9) - Literally, **flint** refers to a hard rock that produces sparks when struck against metal and was used to make cutting tools with sharp edges.

Like a whirlwind - Literally a tempest, a storm with strong winds, a hurricane. The picture is of the wheels whirring and revolving as the enemy beats down on its helpless prey. Figuratively whirlwind pictures God's pursuit of the wicked (Ps. 83:15; Is 66:15; Am 1:14; Nah 1:3) or of any calamity (Pr. 1:27).

Arrows... horses... chariot wheels - Descriptions of the overwhelming force that God is bringing against Israel. The outcome of the battle is not in question.

Isaiah 5:29 Its roaring is like a lioness, and it roars like young lions; It growls as it seizes the prey and carries it off with no one to deliver it:

- **Roaring:** Isa 31:4 Ge 49:9 Nu 24:9 Jer 4:7 49:19 50:17 Ho 11:10 Am 3:8 Zec 11:3
- **seizes:** Isa 42:22 49:24,25 Ps 50:22 Mic 5:8
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Isa 5:29, 30 present a description of the what the battle will look like.

Roaring... growls... seizes... carries off - The beastly aspect of the barbarian brutish nation is dramatically described. There is **no one to deliver** from such an overwhelming force. Israel is like a helpless prey before the powerful predator.

Isaiah 5:30 And it will growl over it in that day like the roaring of the sea. If one looks to the land, behold, there is darkness and distress; Even the light is darkened by its clouds:

- Ps 93:3,4 Jer 6:23 50:42 Lk 21:25
- **behold:** Isa 8:22 13:10 Ex 10:21-23 Jer 4:23-28 La 3:2 Eze 32:7,8 Joe 2:10 Am 8:9 Mt 24:29 Lk 21:25,26 Rev 6:12 16:10,11
- Isaiah 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

We see a similar description in Isaiah 8...

Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness. (Is 8:22)

Invincible armies, roaring uncaged lions, and ominous storm clouds are quite fear-provoking.

It will growl - The nation who is pictured like a powerful lion. It is interesting that the lion's roar was designed to paralyze the panicked prey ("scared stiff"). The lion is the "king of the beasts" so there would be no rescue available.

If one looks to the land - What they see is descriptive of what the land looks like after this devastating destruction.

Darkness and distress... even the light is darkened - Israel's situation after the invasion is pictured as utterly hopeless. This is what their Word rejecting attitude and sinful behavior has wrought! It is notable that God offers no positive options which might allow them to escape their dire fate.

Rich Cathers applies this chapter writing...

This can sound pretty scary, depending on where you're sitting. It all depends on what kind of fruit your "vineyard" is producing. Is it God's kind of fruit, or just imitation wax fruit? God is serious about finding the right fruit. If your life is nothing but a bunch of stinkberries, then you've got something to worry about. But if you've come to the point where you've received Jesus' forgiveness for your sins, then you've nothing to worry about. ([Isaiah 5](#))

Gary Smith gives a fitting conclusion to this prophetic parable noting that...

The prophet's role, and each reader's responsibility, is to warn others of God's impending holy judgment and to persuade the ungodly to change their ways. Like Isaiah, preachers, teachers, and parents need to weep over the evil that pervades this world. It is especially sad when friends, neighbors, fellow workers, children, and fellow church members do not classify their evil deeds as sins against God. People need to communicate their deep sadness, explain the just demands of God, encourage people to humble themselves, and warn of irresistible judgment for those who do not glorify God. There is no hope for those who ignore, scorn, or reject God (5:12,17,24). One day an Almighty Lion will roar over them (5:29). (Ibid)