

ISAIAH 5 | *Six Woes and Four Therefore*

Vineyard of Sour Grapes

1 Let me [Isaiah] sing for my beloved [Yahweh]¹ my love song concerning his vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. 2 He dug it, cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines. He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it. And he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded stinky grapes.²

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.³ 4 What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield stinky grapes?

5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured. I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. 6 I will make it a waste. It shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting. And he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!⁴

Six Woes and Four Therefore

8 Woe [1] to those who join house to house, who add field to field,⁵ until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. 9 Yahweh of hosts has sworn in my hearing: Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. 10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.

11 Woe [2] to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! 12 They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute, and wine at their feasts. But they do not regard the deeds of Yahweh or see the work of his hands.

¹ Isaiah had a very intimate, personal relationship with God.

² Did Jesus learn how to tell parables from reading Isaiah? **Mt 21:33** 33 Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country.

³ The evidence is so compelling, Yahweh allows the defendant, Judah, to sit in the judge's chair.

⁴ **Is 3:14** 14 Yahweh will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

⁵ This wasn't supposed to be happening in Israel because of the fifty-year Jubilee.

13 Therefore [1] my people go into exile (גלה) for lack of knowledge (דעת). Their honoured men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

14 Therefore [2] Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down, her revellers and he who exults in her. 15 Man is humbled,⁶ and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the high are brought low. 16 But Yahweh of hosts is exalted in justice (משפט), and the Holy God shows himself holy⁷ in righteousness (צדקה). 17 Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.

18 Woe [3] to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, 19 who say: Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see (ראה) it. Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know (ידע) it! 20 Woe [4] to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe [5] to those who are wise (חכם) in their own eyes, and understanding (בין) in their own sight!⁸ 22 Woe [6] to those who are heroes at drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink, 23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of his right!

24 Therefore [3], as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust. For they have rejected (מאס) the law (תורה) of Yahweh of hosts and have despised (נאץ) the word (אמרה) of the Holy One of Israel. 25 Therefore [4] the anger (אף) of Yahweh was kindled against his people, and he stretched out (נטה) his hand against them and struck them. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger (אף) has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

26 He will raise a signal for nations (גוים) far away and whistle for them from the ends of the earth, and behold, quickly, speedily they come! 27 None is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps. Not a waistband is loose, not a sandal strap broken. 28 Their arrows are sharp, all their bows bent. Their horses' hoofs seem like flint, and their wheels like the whirlwind. 29 Their roaring is like a lion, like young lions they roar. They growl and seize their prey. They carry it off, and none can rescue. 30 They will growl over it on that day, like the growling of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress, and the light is darkened by its clouds.

⁶ See Is 2.

⁷ See *God's Holiness*.

⁸ **Pr 3:7** Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear Yahweh and turn away from evil.

Commentary

1. Introduction.

- a. Remember to keep in mind the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants.
- b. Isaiah must be read with Deuteronomy in the other hand.
- c. Of Lindsay's five Rs (Rebellion, Retribution, Redemption, Restoration, Revelation), the focus in ch. 5 is Rebellion and Retribution.

2. Vineyard Love Song (Is 5:1-2).

- a. **Is 5:1-4** 1 Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. 2 He dug it, cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines. He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it. And he looked for it to yield grapes/wine-berries (עֲנָבִים), but it yielded sour, unripe berries (שִׁבְעָרִים).
- b. Question: How well did God set up Israel, and what has she done with it?
- c. God loved Israel and set her up as a vineyard to produce justice and righteousness.
(1) Ge 49.11; Nu 13.23, Dt 32.14
(2) **Dt 32:28-33** 28 "For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them. 29 If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end! 30 How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had given them up? 31 For their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves. 32 For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison; their clusters are bitter; 33 their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of asps.
- d. Likewise, God has set us up for success. If we fail, we cannot blame God.

3. Whose at Fault for the Sour Grapes? (Is 5:3-4).

- a. **Is 5:3-4** 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. 4 What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes/wine-berries, why did it yield sour, unripe berries?
- b. Question: Whose at fault for the sour grapes, God or Israel?
- c. God rightly expected justice and righteousness from Israel, but Israel has failed. God is not at fault.

4. Vineyard Ruined (Is 5:5-6).

- a. **Is 5:5-6** 5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured. I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. 6 I will make it a waste. It shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
- b. Question: What will God do to his vineyard?
- c. Israel has produced only violence and injustice, so God will make her a waste.
- d. The land is still there. Perhaps after a long time of fallowness, the vineyard will be rebuilt!

(1) **Am 9:13–15** 13 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. 14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,” says the Lord your God.

5. The Reason for the Vineyard’s Ruin (Is 5:7).

- a. **Is 5:7** 7 For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting. And he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!
- b. Question: Why is God ruining his vineyard, Judah?
- c. God is ruining his vineyard because he finds so much violence and injustice in Judah.
- d. Biblical justice is not equality of result (social, economic) but equality of opportunity under the rule of law. It involves accountability and responsibility. It is a level playing field for the rich and the poor. It is “Lady Justice” with her blindfold on.
- e. The six woes that follow detail Judah’s violence and injustice.
- f. The four therefores that follow detail the ruining of the vineyard.

6. The First Woe: Lonely Landowners (Is 5:8-10).

- a. **Is 5:8-10** 8 Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. 9 Yahweh of hosts has sworn in my hearing: Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. 10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.
- b. The rich are consolidating their real estate and pushing the poor off the land. The poor are homeless.
- c. In God’s economy, a populous nation is a productive nation.
 - (1) **Ge 1:28** 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.
 - (2) **Ge 9:1** 1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.
- d. Each tribe was to live on its own inheritance.
 - (1) **Nu 26:51-56** 51 This was the list of the people of Israel, 601,730. 52 Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, 53 Among these the land shall be divided for inheritance according to the number of names. 54 To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Every tribe shall be given its inheritance in proportion to its list. 55 But the land shall be divided by lot. According to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. 56 Their inheritance shall be divided according to lot between the larger and the smaller.
- e. Each family was to live under its own vine and fig tree.

- (1) **1 Ki 4:25** 25 And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.
 - (2) **Zec 3:10** 10 In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree.
- f. The rich are to look after the poor.
- (1) **Dt 15:7-11** 7 If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that Yahweh your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, 8 but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. ...10 You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this Yahweh your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.

7. The Second Woe: Indulgers in Entertainment (Is 5:11-12).

- a. **Is 5:11-12** 11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! 12 They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute, and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of Yahweh, or see the work of his hands.
- b. Many in Judah are getting drunk and ignoring God.
- c. Today, these verses describe both the idle rich and the idle poor. Applied today, any addiction (alcohol, marijuana, video games, Netflix, Facebook, conspiracy theories on the internet, Youtube) that takes up most of the day and night and crowds out learning about God and his ways.

8. The First Two Therefore (Is 5:13-17).

- a. **Is 5:13-17** 13 Therefore my people go into exile (גלה) for lack of knowledge (יָדָעַת). Their honoured men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst. 14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down, her revellers and he who exults in her. 15 Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the high are brought low. 16 But Yahweh of hosts is exalted in justice (מִצְדָּקָה), and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness (צְדִיקָה). 17 Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.
- b. The consequences are:
 - (1) Exile.
 - (2) Hunger and thirst.
 - (3) Death.
 - (4) Humbling.
- c. A pastoral landscape shall result. The large, beautiful houses of v. 9 will become the “ruins of the rich” (v. 17). The lonely rich will be replaced by nomads. The economy will suffer as it moves from a crop-based economy to a sheep-grazing economy.
- d. The humbling of v. 15 echoes the chapter theme of Is 2.
- e. Judah has failed to produce justice and righteousness, but God won’t (v. 16).

9. Four More Woes: The Mindset of Rebellion (Is 5:18-23).

- a. **Is 5:18-19** 18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, 19 who say: Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see (הֵרָאָה) it. Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know (יָדַעַ) it! 20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise (חֲכָמִים) in their own eyes, and understanding (בִּינָה) in their own sight! 22 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink, 23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of his right!
- b. Woe to arrogant sinners who chuckle at God's power to punish them (vv.18-19).
 - (1) **Eze 12:22** 22 Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel saying, The days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing?
 - (2) **2 Pe 3:4** 4 They will say, Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.
 - (3) History is full of unanticipated, unexpected turns of events.
 - (4) This was the attitude of humanity before the global flood (Ge 6-8).
- c. Woe to those who twist what God has determined to be good and evil (v. 20).
 - (1) **Am 5:7** 7 O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth!
 - (2) Friedrich Nietzsche encouraged us to advance "beyond good and evil."
 - (3) Who gets determine what is morally right and morally wrong in our society today? This is an absolutely fundamental question.
 - (4) Nazi Germany and Soviet Union were both atheistic, humanist systems with no reference to God as the source of moral absolutes.
 - (5) Humanity is expert at twisting right and wrong with the manipulative use of terminology (i.e., "love," "pro-choice," "tolerance") and symbols (i.e., rainbow).
- d. Woe to those who celebrate how wise humanity has become without God (v. 21).
 - (1) **Pr 3:7** 7 Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear Yahweh, and turn away from evil.
 - (2) **Ro 1:21** 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools....
 - (3) **Ro 12:16** 16 Never be wise in your own sight.
 - (4) In New Zealand's extremely secular humanist/socialist/postmodernist culture, there is no room in the public square to say, "Thus says the Lord...."
 - (5) Public policy is determined based on the utopian visions of the elite class of globalist intellectuals, hurt feelings, and one-sided, manipulated statistics, rather than time-honoured truths from God's word, the lessons of history, and the common sense of ordinary people (i.e., anti-smacking law, legalisation of marijuana use).
- e. Woe to intoxicated judges who render unjust verdicts for personal gain (vv. 22-23).
 - (1) The reason New Zealand has little judicial corruption is because of its Judaeo-Christian roots. As she turns away from her roots toward atheism, however, the corruption will return. It's only a matter of time.

10. Two More Therefore (Is 5:24-25).

- a. **Is 5:24-25** 24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust. For they have rejected (מאַס) the law (תּוֹרָה) of Yahweh of hosts and have despised (זָנָה) the word of the Holy One of Israel. 25 Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.
- b. God will eventually strike those who choose the mindset of the previous paragraph. Everything the arrogant rebels have done will turn to nothing. (v. 24).
- c. At bottom is the people's rejection of God's word (v. 24).
- d. There will be dead bodies in the streets with no one to bury them (v. 25).

11. A Most Impressive Army Is Coming (Is 5:26-30).

- a. **Is 5:26-30** 26 He will raise a signal for nations far away and whistle for them from the ends of the earth, and behold, quickly, speedily they come! 27 None is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps. Not a waistband is loose, not a sandal strap broken. 28 Their arrows are sharp, all their bows bent. Their horses' hoofs seem like flint, and their wheels like the whirlwind. 29 Their roaring is like a lion, like young lions they roar. They growl and seize their prey. They carry it off, and none can rescue. 30 They will growl over it on that day, like the growling of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress, and the light is darkened by its clouds.
- b. In response to Judah's rebellion, God will invite a mighty army to invade. Judah's hedge of protection is removed!
 - (1) **Is 5:5** 5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured. I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.
 - (2) In history, the "civilised" West has often been suddenly and devastatingly invaded by the "barbarian" East (Attila the Hun, Tamerlane, Genghis Khan). The pattern is greatness fuelled by strong families, discipline, hard work, and moral certainty, followed by apathy and moral and economic decline, followed by military invasion.
- c. This is a prophecy where there is short-term fulfillment and long-term foreshadowing.
 - (1) In the short-term, both Assyria and Babylon invaded Judah.
 - (2) In the long-term, Israel will again be invaded by a faraway nation.
 - (a) **Re 12:6** 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.
 - (b) **Re 12:13** 13 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.
 - (c) **Re 16:14-16** 14 For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of

God the Almighty. ... 16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

(d) Think J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers*.

- d. British New Zealanders have never experienced a military invasion of their homeland. New Zealand seems the last place on earth that would ever be invaded. This results in an apathy and nonchalance that almost every other nation on earth cannot afford. New Zealand spends almost nothing on its national defense, resting behind the American-Australian military shield. However, New Zealand is not immune from invasion, particularly from East Asia, as WWII proves.

12. Final Thoughts.

- a. There is truly nothing new under the sun. Theological, spiritual, and moral degeneracy always results in national decline leading to harsh judgment.
- b. The Bible is how we are expected to interpret the world around us.
- c. With all this doom and gloom, it's an appropriate time to turn and focus on God's holiness.
- d. We must not forget the positive moments scattered here and there in Is 1-5 where there is a distinct hope for the redeemed remnant, those who have taken shelter under the shadow of the Almighty by trusting in the Lord Jesus Messiah. That's us.