

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 5

*Theme: The song of the vineyard;
the six woes that follow*

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This chapter brings us to the end of the section which was begun in chapter 2. The first seven verses are the song of the vineyard which tells of the sins of the nation Israel and the coming captivity. The balance of the chapter gives the six woes or the six specific sins which bring down the judgment of God upon the nation. The penalty for each sin is listed.¹

Conditions that did prevail during the Babylonian captivity and will prevail at the establishment of the Kingdom.

This chapter is a continuation of one complete prophecy which began in chapter 2 and will conclude in chapter 5. In these chapters we actually have a synopsis of the entire Book of Isaiah, because he touches all the bases here that he will touch upon in the rest of the book.

Chapter 4 is the briefest chapter in the book; it is only six verses long. We have set before us a description of the conditions which prevailed at the time of the Babylonian captivity and also of the conditions which will exist during the Great Tribulation period right before the setting up of the messianic Kingdom.

The structure of the chapter is very simple. The first verse is the only one that depicts conditions during the time of the Great Tribulation, or the last days. The remainder of the chapter sets before the reader the preparation that will be necessary for entering the Kingdom. This section, of course, is entirely anticipatory.²

Isa. 5 is a complete prophecy not connected with the chapters before or after it, except in message. It is like chapter 1 in that it gives a detailed reproof of the Jews for their sins, and adds curse upon curse predicted to come upon them through the Babylonian invasion of Judah which was fulfilled about 150 years afterward. It is a more forceful, severe, and varied prophecy than the one of Isa. 1. Here Isaiah sings a song to Jehovah whom he calls "my well-beloved," calling it "a song of my beloved" concerning His vineyard which He has in a very fruitful place (Isa. 5:1).³

The Song Of The Vineyard (5:1-7)

Those who can read the song of the vineyard in Hebrew tell me that it is without doubt one of the most beautiful songs that has ever been written. There is nothing quite like it; there is nothing to rival it. It is a musical symphony, and it is absolutely impossible to reproduce in English. It is truly a song and comparable to any of the psalms.

The vineyard is the house of Israel (v. 7). Thus, the vineyard becomes one of the two figures in Scripture that are taken from the botanical world to represent the whole nation of Israel. The fig tree is the other figure that is used.

Before His death our Lord gave a parable of the vineyard which obviously referred to the whole house of Israel (see Matt. 21:33-46). In Isaiah the prophet announces the imminent captivity of the northern kingdom into Assyria and of the southern kingdom into Babylon. In Matthew the Lord Jesus Christ showed that God had given Israel a second chance in their return from the seventy-year Babylonian captivity, but the nation's rejection of the Son of God would usher in a more extensive and serious dispersion.⁴

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

The preacher become a troubadour and sang a folk song to the Lord ("my beloved"). Perhaps the people who had ignored his sermons would listen to his song. He sang about his own people (v. 7) and pointed out how good God had been to them. God gave them a holy law and a wonderful land, but they broke the law and defiled the land with their sins and failed to produce fruit for God's glory. God had done for them all that He could do. Now all that remained for Him to do was bring judgment on the fruitless vineyard and make it a waste. (Note that Jesus referred to this passage in Matt. 21:33-44).⁵

For exquisite beauty of language and consummate skill in effective communication, this parable is virtually peerless. One difficulty of a literary masterpiece is that a would-be translator who is not the literary equal of the author faces an impossible task . . . It is in fact an outstanding example of the way the inspiring Spirit employed human language to convey the divine message. (Grogan)

Isaiah, like a folk singer, sang a parable about a vineyard that compared Israel to a vineyard that Yahweh had planted and from which He legitimately expected to receive fruit. One cannot help but wonder if this passage lay behind Jesus' teaching on the vine and the branches in John 15:1-6. The prophet's original audience did not realize what this song was about at first. It started out sounding like a happy wedding song, but it turned out to be a funeral dirge announcing Israel's death. This chiasmic "song" is only the first part of Isaiah's unified message in this chapter. His song flowed into a sermon. This is the first of several songs in Isaiah (c⁶f. chs. 12, 35; 54:1-10; et al.).

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

[Now will I sing to my well-beloved ...] The 6th prophecy in Isaiah (Isa. 5:1-30, fulfilled).⁷

Isaiah's "Song of the Vineyard" is in three parts: (1) an introduction to the allegory (vv. 1, 2); (2) an accusation and sentence (vv. 3-6); (3) an interpretation of the allegory (v. 7; see Ps. 80:8-16).

Israel, the Lord's Vineyard [Vs 1-7]

Ps 80; Hos 10:1; Rom 11:1-6; Mt 21:33-41; Mk 12:1-9; Lk 20:9-19.

"My beloved" is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world. **"A very fruitful hill"** -- there is nothing wrong with the soil. The problem is with the vineyard itself; that is, with the vine. Verse 7 makes it quite clear that the vineyard is the house of Israel; it is Judah. It is not the church or something else. This is clear; we do not have to guess at these things.

⁵ Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament

⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

God is again inviting us into court to consider His charges against Israel. And, my friend, the minute you listen to Him and to His charge against Israel, you will find yourself condemned.⁸

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. (Calvin)

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. (Spurgeon)

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

Wild grapes mean that the vineyard produced just what you would expect it to produce if nothing had been done to it. All the love, care, time, work, and investment resulted had no result.

God took the nation Israel out of Egypt and placed them in the Promised Land. He expected them to produce the fruits of righteousness and required them to glorify His name. They failed ignominiously.⁹

5:1-2. In his song Isaiah pictured his loved One (i.e., God), planting a vineyard on a fertile hillside, removing the stones (of which there are many in Israel!) and planting only the best vines. He built a watchtower, a stone structure from which to guard the vineyard (cf. "shelter," 1:8). And He made a winepress in anticipation of producing good wine. However, only poor grapes grew on His vines.¹⁰

Isaiah offered to sing a song for his good friend about his friend's "vineyard," a figure for one's bride (cf. Song of Sol. 1:6; 8:12). Actually, this song contains a harsh message about another person and His "vineyard," namely: Yahweh and Israel. Isaiah painted a picture of a man cultivating his relationship with his wife, only to have her turn out to be disappointing. But, as would shortly become clear, he was really describing God's careful preparation of Israel to bring forth spiritual fruit. The man double-fenced his vineyard and built a watchtower and a wine vat (storage tank) in it, indicating that He intended it to satisfy Him for a long time. Yet all His work was for naught; His finest vines (Heb. sorek) disappointed Him. Ezekiel observed that if a vine does not produce fruit, it is good for nothing (Ezek. 15:2-5; cf. John 15:6).¹¹

⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

¹¹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

5:1-7 The lesson of the song of the vineyard shows that God's chosen nation was to bear fruit—to carry out his work, to uphold justice. It did bear fruit, but the fruit was bad. Jesus said, "Just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions" (Matthew 7:20). Have you examined your own "fruit" lately? Is it good or bad—useful or wild?¹²

Unfortunately, the vineyard didn't exactly live up to expectations. It certainly wasn't the owner's fault. He prepared it just right, and planted the best vines. He set up a guard tower to keep away thieves, birds, and pests. He did everything he could in expectation and anticipation of a fruitful harvest.

But in spite of everything the owner had done, the only thing that this vineyard produced was worthless grapes. Interestingly, the word translated "worthless" here is "be-oo-SHEEM," which is the plural of "beOSHE," which means "stench, foul odor." It's not like these are simply flavorless grapes - they are stinkberries.¹³

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

God asks these people to judge, to equate the difference between God and Israel. Very candidly, friend, when you look at your own life are you ready to complain against God? I know how I whined and howled when I got cancer. I thought the Lord was being unfair. Then I had the opportunity of lying alone on that hospital bed and looking at my life. My friend, God wasn't wrong -- I was wrong and I needed to face up to it. We need to get rid of the idea that somehow we are something special. God is not going to do anything to us that is unjust. He is not going to do anything that is wrong. You and I are wrong; God isn't wrong.¹⁴

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

God states that He made every provision on His part for them to produce the fruits of righteousness. Their failure under these circumstances becomes very serious.

The question is simple. Who is to blame for the harvest of only wild grapes? Is it the fault of the owner of the vineyard, or is it the fault of the vineyard itself?

In the story, there was nothing left undone by the owner of the vineyard. He did all he could do. In the same way, God cannot be blamed at all for the wild grapes Israel brought forth. God did all He could do, apart from making men robots, acting apart from or against their wills.¹⁵

It is possible for God to do a work in His people, but for His people to receive that work in vain. Paul warned, We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Corinthians 6:1)

¹² Life Application Study Bible.

¹³ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0501.php>

¹⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁵ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-5.html>

Of course, a literal vineyard doesn't do anything. But we, as God's vineyard, are called to work with the grace of God, so that grace is not received in vain. Grace isn't given because of any works, past, present or promised; yet it is given to encourage work, not to say work is unnecessary. God doesn't want us to receive His grace and become passive. Paul knew that God gives His grace, we work hard, and the work of God is done.¹⁶

Has it been so with us? Have we rewarded the Wellbeloved 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? (Spurgeon)

Isaiah next appealed to his audience, the people of Jerusalem and Judah, speaking for his well-beloved (God). He asked them for their opinion. What more could he have done to ensure a good crop? Why did his vines produce worthless (sour) grapes? In view of what the owner had done (vv. 1-2), the answers would have to be: "You could have done nothing more than you did," and: "The grapes were the cause of the disappointment, not you."¹⁷

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

This is a clear prediction of the forthcoming captivities of both the kingdoms. For over five hundred years God had kept the great nations of the world off the land bridge of three continents -- Palestine. He put a wall around the children of Israel. God would not let anybody touch them, though many times He could have judged them. But God says, "You are My vineyard. I have hedged you in, but now I am breaking down the wall." First Syria, then Assyria, then Babylon -- they all poured into Israel's land and laid it waste. And in spite of everything that has been done in that land today, it is still a pretty desolate looking place. God has judged it.¹⁸

In a limited sense, God has given the responsibility of taking away hedges to the church. When a Christian is stubbornly unrepentant, it may be the job of the church to turn them over to Satan, so they will feel the pain of their sin and repent (1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5). The church does this by putting such ones outside the spiritual protection found among God's people.¹⁹

5:5-6 Judgment On The Vineyard

While the men of Judah are still listening, the owner says, "Because the vineyard has proved to be utterly fruitless, in spite of everything I've done to make it fruitful, this is what I'm going to do: I'm going to let it be ruined. I'll take away its protective hedges, break down its walls, and let people walk across it. It will be trampled to the ground, laid waste. No one will work the land, and it will be consumed with weeds and thorns. I'm not even going to let rain fall on it."

Of course, at this point, we have to wonder what kind of vineyard owner has the power to charge rain clouds not to rain... This vineyard owner who is so loved by Isaiah is the Lord Himself.

¹⁶ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-5.html>

¹⁷ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁹ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-5.html>

God And Fruitlessness

When we read the Bible, one thing that we discover about God is that He insists on fruit. What is fruit? It's the produce of your life, and God wants it to be both existent and abundant. God doesn't just want fruit. He insists on it. Remember, Jesus cursed the fig tree for not bearing fruit:²⁰

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

"I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." For over a thousand years, the former (fall) and the latter (spring) rains did not fall. That is why that land is so desolate today. The former rains, I understand, have begun, but not the latter.²¹

5:3-6. The words in these verses in the song are "spoken" by God. He asked the people of Judah to judge the situation. They were to tell whether the bad grapes were the fault of the vineyard Owner. Though God could have done nothing more to make the vineyard productive (v. 4) there was one thing He would now do: He would let it be destroyed (vv. 5-6). By removing the protective hedge... its wall (probably of stone) around it, He would allow animals (including foxes, Song 2:15) to enter and destroy it. Without cultivating the vines, thorn bushes would grow up and smother them. Nor would God let rain fall on the vineyard. Because of the nation's sinful actions (their bad fruit), destruction would come. Without God's protection Judah would be ruined.²²

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

[For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is ...] God explained His own parable: His vineyard was the house of Israel and His "pleasant plant" the men of Judah. He expected to harvest good grapes of justice and righteousness, but instead the vine produced oppression and injustice until there was a great cry for mercy coming up to Him.²³

[the house of Israel, and the men of Judah] "The house of Israel" and "the men of Judah" are repeatedly used of the same people -- Judah and Jerusalem -- to whom Isaiah was sent to prophesy (Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 3:1,8,16,17; 4:3-5; 5:7). Multitudes of the ten tribes were so completely destroyed in Isaiah's time (2Ki. 17) that Judah was the only kingdom of Israel left (see pt. 53 in The Anglo-Saxon Theory).²⁴

²⁰ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0501.php>

²¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²² The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

²³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Isaiah now shocked his audience by identifying the characters in his parable by name. His well-beloved and the owner of the vineyard was Yahweh of Hosts, not some unnamed friend; the vineyard was Israel, not his friend's wife (cf. 1:8; 3:14; Ps. 80:8-18; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 15:6-8; Hos. 10:1; Matt. 21:33-44); and the Judahites were the individual plants in this unresponsive vineyard.²⁵

The good fruit God looked for was justice (the righting of wrongs; Heb. *mishpat*) and righteousness (right relationships; Heb. *tsedaqah*), but the bad fruit the vines produced was oppression (the inflicting of wrongs; Heb. *mispakh*) and violence (wrong relationships; Heb. *tse'aqah*; cf. 60:21; 61:3). Isaiah used paronomasia (a pun) to make his contrasts more forceful and memorable. Instead of *mishpat* God got *mispakh*, and instead of *tsedaqah* He received *tse'aqah*.²⁶

You don't have to guess whom the prophet is talking about. The vineyard refers to the whole house of Israel, and this verse makes that crystal clear. And in that vineyard God "looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."²⁷

The Six Woes (5:8-30)

Once again God is going to spell it all out. Six woes are mentioned here, and each one tells of a certain sin for which God is judging Israel. If you want to apply these to your life or to the life of our nation, you can do it. But the interpretation is for Israel; it has already been fulfilled for them. We can certainly make application to our own hearts and lives, however.²⁸

5:7. The vineyard in this song is identified as Israel and Judah. As elsewhere in Isaiah, "Israel" is sometimes a synonym for the Southern Kingdom (Neh. 1:6; 13:3). Delighting in His people, God wanted good fruit, that is, justice and righteousness (cf. comments on Isa. 1:21). Instead He saw only bloodshed (cf. 1:15) and heard cries of distress. Because of its "bad grapes" (injustice) most people would be killed or taken into captivity. Isaiah used two interesting cases of assonance (similarity in word sounds) to stress the contrast between what God expected in His people and what happened to them. "Justice" (*mišpāt*) was replaced with "bloodshed" (*mišpoḥ*), and instead of "righteousness" (*šeḏāqâh*) there was "distress" (*se'āqâh*).²⁹

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

[Woe unto them that join house to house] Six woe's in Isaiah 5;

1. Woe to the covetous (Isa. 5:8)
2. Woe to the drunkards (Isa. 5:11)
3. Woe to those that multiply sin (Isa. 5:18-19)
4. Woe to those that have no sense of right and wrong because of depravity (Isa. 5:20)

²⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

5. Woe to those who are proud and wise in their own eyes (Isa. 5:21)
6. Woe to drunkards who justify the wicked and condemn the righteous (Isa. 5:22-23)³⁰

[lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth] An expression of covetousness -- coveting more fields until they would own them all and be the greatest in the earth.

This is the first sin of Israel. What is it? This sin is the lust of the eye; more specifically, it is covetousness. Colossians 3:5 tells us: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Covetousness is idolatry. It is a big business expanding at the expense of the little man. That is what happened in Israel -- the little man was squeezed out. It was done so that great fortunes might be accumulated. The only excuse for such expansion is the insatiable greed for more property and possessions. God will judge the people for that.

It is a sad story that we have here. The picture is one of a great complex of farms. In Isaiah's day the people were agricultural people. They built big corporations, big complexes. This was not done for the good of the little man, the small operator. It was done to accumulate wealth. Anything to which you give yourself completely becomes your religion. Many people today are worshipping at the altar of covetousness.

Covetousness is a mean-looking god. It has the face of a silver dollar or a dollar bill. It is one thing that brought down Israel and for which God judged them. Instead of following God's instructions, they were beginning to take all of the richness from the soil. We are doing the same thing today. We are living in a world which is actually depleted of its energy. We are frantically searching for oil, for any kind of energy that can be used. Why? Because men are covetous, and that covetousness is depleting the earth of its riches. That is a judgment of God.³¹

5:8-10. Each of the six indictments is introduced by Woe (hōy). Some people were acquiring much land at the expense of their fellow countrymen (cf. Micah 2:1-2). Selling houses permanently in a walled city was allowed under the Law, but selling houses in unwalled cities and fields was allowed only until the Year of Jubilee when the houses would revert back to their former owners. Because God had given the people the land they were not to get rich at others' expense. Because of this sin the big houses and mansions the people once enjoyed would be empty, for many people would be killed and, as noted in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 28:20-24), their crops would fail. Normally a large vineyard would produce many gallons of wine, but here the amount would be a mere six gallons (a bath). And six bushels (a homer) of seed would normally yield scores of bushels of grain, but ironically the grain would be only one-half a bushel (an ephah), just 1/12 the amount of seed sown!³²

For it cannot be condemned as a thing in itself wrong, if a man add field to field and house to house; but he looked at the disposition of mind, which cannot at all be satisfied, when it is once inflamed by the desire of gain. Accordingly, he describes the feelings of those who never have enough, and whom no wealth can satisfy. (Calvin)

³⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

³¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³² The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

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

[Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant]

Two judgments in Isa. 5:9-10;

1. Many houses, even the great and most beautiful ones, shall be desolate. Even though you multiply many houses and farms (as in Isa. 5:8), they shall become desolate.
2. There will be little yield to crops. Ten acres of vineyard will yield only 8 gallons and 3 pints. Seed sown will produce only 10 percent of what was sown.³³

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

[bath] A bath was the same as an ephah -- .625 bushel (5 gallons dry or 9 gallons liquid). See Ezek. 45:10-11.

[homer] A homer was 10 baths or 10 ephahs -- about 6.25 bushels.

God is simply saying that even though they expand their lands, the yield will not be great because there will be a famine which will decimate the crop. Extended holdings will not produce a bumper crop at all.

The earth you and I are living on is running short of energy. We are running out of oil. We are running out of arable lands. This subject of ecology is an important matter. Pollution is destroying much of the earth. One of these days we are going to be on a desolate planet. We are quickly running out of energy. If you are planning on taking a trip, you had better go now, because there is going to be a shortage of fuel. It may not happen in our lifetime, but there are those who believe that it will be in our lifetime. This is the judgment that God made on the nation Israel in that day.³⁴

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

[that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them]

Four sins of Judah:

1. Continually drinking wine and becoming inflamed by it
2. Revelling with music, wine and food -- following the pattern of eat, drink, and be merry (Isa. 5:12; Eccl. 8:15; Lk. 12:19)
3. Disregarding the work of the Lord (Isa. 5:12)
4. Having no consideration for His salvation and blessings (Isa. 5:12; cp. Col. 2:11)³⁵

³³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

5:11-12. Apparently heavy consumption of wine was prevalent in Isaiah's day for this sin is mentioned in two of the six woes (cf. v. 22). People were so addicted to wine that, unlike most drunkards, they rose early in the morning to drink. They also stayed up late at night. In their revelry they enjoyed music at their banquets, but cared nothing for the deeds of the Lord. Their lack of respect for the work of His hands meant they abused other people made in the image of God. Caring only for their own pleasures, they had no concern for the Lord or for others.³⁶

5:11-13 These people spent many hours drinking and partying, but Isaiah predicted that eventually many would die of hunger and thirst. Ironically, our pleasures—if they do not have God's blessing—may destroy us. Leaving God out of our lives allows sin to come in. Pursuing our own pleasure while ignoring or exploiting the needs of others leaves us empty and under God's anger. God wants us to enjoy life (1 Timothy 6:17) but to avoid those activities that could lead us away from him.³⁷

These people were "party animals" who paid no attention to the Lord or His works. Seeking pleasure is not wrong in itself unless it becomes too absorbing, as it had with many Israelites. Too much partying produces insensitivity to spiritual things

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

This is the second woe, the second sin. Drunkenness and pleasure on a national scale are the sins mentioned here, and they lead to the deadening of all spiritual perception.

I notice that the news media do not release today, as they did a number of years ago, the number of alcoholics that we have in this country. The last report I got, which was several years ago, was that there were ten million alcoholics in the United States. They do put in the paper what is done with the tax money the liquor industry pays. It goes to take care of the alcoholics and to maintain police forces who take care of the accidents caused by drunk drivers! Of course, no one can pay for the lives of the innocent victims taken in such useless accidents. No one knows how many decisions are made in our government by people who have just come from a cocktail party. These are the things that lower the morals of a nation. They destroy a nation and eat at its vitals like a cancer. Such a nation is on the verge of falling prey to an enemy without.³⁸

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

[Therefore my people are gone into captivity] Because of these sins judgment will come to Judah and Jerusalem, and they will go into captivity.

[because they have no knowledge] Ignorance was another great cause for judgment.

³⁶ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

³⁷ Life Application Study Bible.

³⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

5:13-17. Because of Judah's lifestyle she would experience several results, the worst being exile. Included in that experience would be death by hunger and thirst (v. 13). Many would die, both nobles and masses, since death has no respect for rank (v. 14). The carousing drunkards (brawlers and revelers) of whom Isaiah had just spoken (vv. 11-12) would also die (v. 14). All proud people would be humiliated (cf. 2:11-12, 17) regardless of their previous stations in life (5:15). With the houses of the wealthy ruined (cf. vv. 8-9) and desolate, lambs would easily graze there (v. 17). This destruction of the nation would lead to a display of God's justice and holiness (v. 16). This does not mean that He delights in revenge. Rather, He keeps His word as spoken in the covenant. His discipline of the nation would show that He still loved her and would someday bring her back into a favored position.³⁹

The majority of the people in this country think it is rather sophisticated to drink, that it is the thing to do. I was very much interested in an article in which the man being interviewed was the director of a therapeutic community for drug addicts in New York. One of the questions he was asked was, "Is there anything parents can do to prevent children from turning to drugs?" This man, whose answers indicated that he probably was not a Christian, said that of paramount importance is an attitude in the home of not using drugs, pills, or alcohol as a means of solving life's problems. He went on to say that he didn't mean that taking an occasional social drink was taboo (of course, he would not go so far as to say that!), but that the old rule, "Monkey see, monkey do," is just as valid on this issue as it is on any other. He said that youngsters who grow up in an atmosphere of drug abuse will be among the first to try marijuana or pills when confronted with their own problems.

Father, mother, if you continue to drink cocktails -- and I see it in many restaurants as I travel across the country -- don't be surprised if your Willie or Mary gets on dope. They will probably move in that direction. After all, why do you drink? The problem of young people on drugs started in the home where parents drink in order to face life. That is what destroys the home and the nation. Drunkenness is one of the things that brought down Israel. What about our nation?⁴⁰

The nation's heroes—the "great and honored"—would suffer the same humiliation as the common people. Why? Because they lived by their own values rather than God's. Many of today's media, business, and sports heroes are idolized because of their ability to live as they please. Are your heroes those who defy God or those who defy the world in order to serve God?⁴¹

The captivity of Israel, ie. the northern kingdom, began during the life of Isaiah, but there is nothing to preclude the idea that Isaiah is predicting the coming captivity of Judah too, as he does later in his book. Commentators who consider the last part of Isaiah as a product of a second person and not Isaiah do not consider that the destruction of the temple and the captivity were miraculously predicted by a number of other prophets. The same prophets predicted the restoration of the temple and the nation, --fulfilled in the founding of the second commonwealth -- long before the events took place. It should be no surprise that Isaiah would do the same and speak of these future events as if they had already happened because they are the ultimate outcome of the continuing waywardness and idolatry of the nation which he condemns. The

³⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

⁴⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴¹ Life Application Study Bible.

warnings of the coming punishment of first, the Assyrians and second, the Babylonians as God's agents for the punishment is only natural in the context of the book. After all he predicted the restoration of the temple in Isa 44:28 and named Cyrus as the one who would issue the decree for the rebuilding. If he miraculously predicted, these events about the rebuilding of the temple then why would he not also predict the destruction and exile which preceded it. What an elaborate web unbelievers weave when they deny the miraculous!⁴²

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

[Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure] Since so many will go to hell that should go to heaven, it will be enlarged -- not its actual dimensions but in the sense of more people going there. Hell is already measureless; it simply opens its mouth to the extra multitudes who would be saved from such a place if they would obey God.

[hell] Hebrew: She'owl (HSN-H7585).

[glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth]

Four things that inherit hell:

1. The glory of sinful men (Isa. 5:8-10)
2. Great numbers of sinful men (Isa. 5:13-14)
3. The pomp of sinful men (Isa. 5:11-12)
4. All who rejoice in sin⁴³

[descend into it] Hell is beneath the earth, so the wicked "descend into it" (Isa. 5:14; Num. 16:30-33; Ps. 63:9; 68:18; Ezek. 31:14-18; 32:24-27; Mt. 12:40; Eph. 4:8-10).⁴⁴

Instead of pleasure-seekers opening their throats to drink wine, Sheol (the place of the dead) would open her throat to drink down the pleasure-seekers. This divine punishment would befall all the people because they shared the pride that marked the property-hungry and the pleasure-mad (cf. 2:9). The offenders' actions showed that they really did not know Yahweh in any life-changing way; the knowledge of God had had no practical effect on the way they lived.⁴⁵

The word translated "hell" in this verse is actually "the grave." It is not a reference to the lake of fire as we think of hell today. It is the Hebrew word sheol. It means that "the grave demands." You find this same word in Proverbs 30:16 which says, "The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough." Death, or the grave, (both satisfactory translations of sheol) is never satisfied. This is the question to ask when you stand at the grave of someone: Where is he? Job asked this question, "But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" (Job 14:10). That is the question everybody is going to have to ask.

⁴² <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa3-6.htm>

⁴³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

Hell at first did not have the idea of a locality, but in time it was thought that since God was in heaven or above, hell or the grave must be below or down. In the New Testament the word hades is the same as the Old Testament sheol. The Lord Jesus used this word when He said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell [hades]..." (Matt. 11:23). The Lord was not talking about a literal descent into the heart of the earth. He simply meant that Capernaum was going to be brought down, and all you have to do is look at the ruins of that place today to know that what He said was true. We always attach strong moral connotations to the terms of direction, up and down: up towards God and down towards hell. Here Isaiah is saying that the nation of Israel will be brought down. They are going to be taken into captivity, they are going to be brought down to the grave, and the glory of the nation will be turned into dust because of her drunkenness and pleasure.

Rudyard Kipling was a prophet as well as a poet when he wrote in his "Recessional":

"Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre."⁴⁶

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

[mean man] The common man.

[mighty man] The peer, the great man of earth. See notes on Isa. 2:10-17.

[lofty] The proud of the earth.

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

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

[lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat] Meaning that human habitations would become pastures for animals.⁴⁷

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

[draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope] Who sin by the cartload. The cart rope implies cartload. Sin and iniquity abounded and multiplied until the whole became enormous. It was like a ropemaker increasing the length of his rope so that there was no end to the increase of sins.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

A description of the gay pride parade floats

This can be translated: "Woe to those whose wickedness is helped by words of lying, who in their pride and unbelief the wrath of God define." You can make a poem out of it, you see. This is the third woe, or the third sin. This is the picture of a nation giving itself in abandon to sin without shame or conscience.⁴⁹

5:18, 19 Some people drag their sins around with them. Some do so arrogantly, but for others, their sins have become a burden that wears them out. Are you dragging around a cartload of sins that you refuse to give up? Before you find yourself worn out and useless, turn to the one who promises to take away your burden of sin and replace it with a purpose for living that is a joy to fulfill (see Matthew 11:28-30).⁵⁰

5:18-19. Perhaps Isaiah referred here to people who were genuinely questioning whether God was in control of the nation. Though attached to sin and wickedness by cords and ropes (i.e., deeply involved in sin) they wondered if God could save their nation. Apparently they wanted God to deliver them even though they did not want to give up their sinful practices. They wanted to see God act (let Him hasten His work) without any spiritual change on their part. However, deliverance, both personal and national, does not work that way. A spiritual change must be made before God will save His people from destruction.⁵¹

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

[Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it] Note the boldness of sinners -- inviting God to hasten His threatened judgment that they might see it, and to let His counsel come quickly that they might know it! This is the spirit of men who are totally abandoned to evil. Their conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and they are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin to the point of no concern whatsoever (1Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 3:8,12-14).⁵²

In other words, they challenge God to do anything about their sin. It is interesting to note that no penalty is mentioned. The very silence here is frightening: the penalty is too awful to mention. The history of the deportation of the nation to Babylon tells something of the frightful judgment of God upon a people who sin with impunity against Him and defy Him. God will judge them. Do you remember Psalm 137? In that psalm Israel prayed against Babylon. They prayed that there would be an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. They said, "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones" (Ps. 137:9). That is horrible beyond words, but that is the judgment that came to Israel. My friend, God is a God of love, but when you reach the place where you defy Him and turn your back on Him, there is no hope for you. Judgment

⁴⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁰ Life Application Study Bible.

⁵¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

⁵² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

comes. There are just too many instances in history to deny this fact, unless you want to shut your eyes to them.⁵³

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

The same class of hardened rebels of Isa. 5:19 who have no sense or consciousness of right and wrong. Everything they feel like doing is right in their own eyes. They completely reverse evil and good, darkness and light, bitter and sweet (cp. Jn. 3:18-22).⁵⁴

This is the fourth sin against which the fourth woe is leveled. It is an attempt to destroy God's standards of right and wrong by substituting man's values which contradict His moral standards. This is the confusion that comes upon a nation when they abandon God after He has blessed them in the past for their acknowledgment of Him. England is a present-day example of this, and America is fast deteriorating in the same direction.

We have this confusion in our standards of marriage today. I listened to a very beautiful little girl tell her story on a television interview program. She was living with a man to whom she was not married, and the reason she gave was that she was being honest -- she did not believe in being a hypocrite. I have news for her: she is not only a hypocrite and dishonest, she knows that what she is doing is wrong and that she should be married. God says she is living in adultery. I don't care, my friend, what you might think about it -- that's what God says.⁵⁵

Some people lead others astray by their perverted values. Evil—for example, adultery, idolatry, materialism, murder, and many other sins forbidden in the Scriptures—is often held up as being good. Those who say such things are under the threat (woe) of God's judgment.

When people see no distinction between good and evil, destruction soon follows. It is easy for people to say, "No one can decide for anyone else what is really right or wrong." They may think getting drunk can't hurt them, extramarital sex isn't really wrong, or money doesn't control them. But when they make excuses for their actions, they break down the distinction between right and wrong. If people do not take God's Word, the Bible, as their standard, soon all moral choices become fuzzy. Without God, they are headed for a breakdown and much suffering.⁵⁶

²¹Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

Of all the deceived people, those who are wise in their own eyes and think themselves to be something when they are nothing are the worst (1Cor. 8:2; Gal. 6:3).⁵⁷

This is the fifth woe, the sin of pride. God hates this above all else. Proverbs 6:16-17 tells us, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a

⁵³Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁶ Life Application Study Bible.

⁵⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood." Pride was the sin of Satan according to 1 Timothy 3:6, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Pride is number one on God's hate parade.⁵⁸

Thinking themselves wise and clever, some people were not relying on God's power to deliver the nation. They thought they could protect themselves.

5:20-21 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" (cf. 1 Sam 2:9; 2 Sam 22:29; Job 29:3; Ps 112:4; Prov 2:13; Acts 26:18; Rom 13:12). "Bitter" is sometimes used of wickedness (Jer 2:19; 4:18) and "sweet" of good (Ps. 103; 109). According to the "modern morality," which is based on the principle of self-gratification, cheating is a way to prosperity, adultery only a casual pleasure, lying merely a means to an end, and homosexuality simply the result of a difference in body chemistry. There can appear no "modern morality," however, until God's law, as it is found in the Scriptures, is pushed aside and discarded.⁵⁹

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

5:22-23. Rather than being heroes and good government authorities, many leaders were known for their heavy drinking. They were ready to be bribed, not caring for the people they were ruling. They were more concerned for their own pleasure than for the rights of the innocent. Therefore they (those leaders) would be judged.⁶⁰

This is the sixth and last woe. Here a people have become so sodden with drunkenness that they have lost their sense of justice. Injustice and crookedness prevail, and the righteous man is falsely accused. No nation can long survive which drops so low in morals that it loses its sense of values.

Ours is a day when people are saying that wrong is right and right is wrong. In my younger days I was in a little theater group, and I remember memorizing a line from *The Great Divide*: "Wrong is wrong from the moment it happens 'til the crack of doom, and all the angels in heaven working overtime cannot make it different or less by a hair." My friend, wrong is still wrong.⁶¹

5:22-23 Heroes Of Booze

The sixth and final woe is also against drunkards. But while the previous woe that mentioned alcohol was against the alcoholic, this is against the person who is a hero in drinking wine, and against the bartender.

⁵⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁹ The Believer's Study Bible

⁶⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁶¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

How can someone be a hero in drinking? Just ask any college fraternity. These organizations often make drinking a test of manhood, or to determine who is "cool." Someone who can binge drink and "hold their liquor" is respected by his peers.

But that is like respecting someone because they are good at Russian Roulette. The 2005 issue of the Annual Review of Public Health reports that alcohol consumption among college students is increasing dramatically each year. There are almost 2,000 alcohol-related unintentional fatal injuries among US college students, and almost 3 million of them drive under the influence each year. More than 300 college students each year die from alcohol poisoning. Hail to the heroes.

And the bartenders who serve alcohol aren't any better off. In God's eyes, binge drinkers and bartenders are the equivalent of cops and judges who take bribes, who are willing to knowingly arrest and sentence innocent people if it makes them some money.⁶²

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

This class of drunkards (Isa. 5:22) added new sins to their list. Instead of giving justice to the people, as judges of Judah, they justified the wicked and condemned the righteous for rewards.

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

Remedy: The Word of the Holy One of Israel.

The destruction of Judah was to be like fire burning stubble and chaff, Judah being like rottenness and their blossom like dust to blow away in the day of punishment.⁶³

"As the fire devoureth the stubble." Though the process of deterioration and rottenness is slow and unobserved, the penalty comes like a fire in the stubble. It is fast and furious and cannot be deterred. It is the anger of the Lord bursting forth in judgment. It moves the frightful judgment of God in the last days.

In Matthew 12:20 the Lord Jesus Christ said, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." He was quoting from Isaiah 42:3. There are certain sins that bring their own judgment; drunkenness is one, and drug abuse is another. I could give many instances of men I have seen engaged in these sins, and the sin worked in their own lives, in the lives of their families, and in their bodies until it destroyed them. God didn't have to do a thing. The smoking flax will break into flame, and that bruised reed will die. The very sin that we commit is the sin that will destroy us.

When I was a young man in Nashville, Tennessee, I went to a dentist who was also a good friend. One day he told me something which had happened in that town several years before. He told me that one of the most reputable doctors in the city had headed up a dope ring. It was

⁶² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0501.php>

⁶³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

difficult for the law to reach him because of his position. One day the doctor tightened up on the dope in order to get a higher price. For a brief period of time he cut off the supply of dope. This, of course, pushed the price up higher. During that time both his son and daughter were exposed as addicts. He knew nothing about their problem until he cut off the dope supply. That man had the shock of his life, and it apparently led to his death, which occurred shortly afterward. God doesn't have to put His hand in and judge every time. In many instances He just lets sin take its course.

The sin of drinking is all around us today. God doesn't do anything about it. He doesn't have to. Drunkenness will bring its own judgment. Judgment will come to the individual, and it will come to the nation. Those of us who have been in the ministry for a long time have seen drinking increase through the years, and I have seen some heavy drinkers be converted and turn to the Lord. But some of them would leave a bottle in the icebox, just in case. That is what leads many back into the awful sin of drinking. That is what Paul is talking about in Romans 8:12 when he says, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." In other words, make no arrangements with the flesh to do what it wants to do. Don't leave a bottle in the refrigerator. Take the bottle out and break it. Many of us kid ourselves about our sins, but some of these sins touch all of us, I am sure.⁶⁴

The people suffered because they rejected God's law. It is sad to see so many people today searching for meaning in life while spurning God's Word. We can avoid the error of Israel and Judah by making not only reading the Bible, but also understanding and obeying it, a high priority in our lives.

5:24-25. These people Isaiah had been writing about would be burned like straw and dry grass and their flowers blown away like dust. This was because they had deliberately disobeyed God's Word (on the Lord Almighty see comments on 1:9; on the Holy One of Israel see comments on 1:4). Because of the Lord's anger many would die in the streets of Jerusalem. His raised hand (cf. 14:27) suggests His executing punishment; the mountains shaking from an earthquake speaks of His awesome presence (cf. Ex. 19:18; 1 Kings 19:11; Jer. 4:24; Hab. 3:10).⁶⁵

5:24-25 They Have Despised The Word

God will judge the nation because of their sin. Why? Because "they have rejected the Law of the Lord of hosts." Because they have despised God's Word. This is why God's anger burned against His own people.

Imagine what He thinks about the church today. So many churches and denominations have completely forsaken the Word of God. They won't teach through it, they refuse to read from it, they deny the reality of it, and instill doubt in it.

2Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Is it any wonder that we aren't getting teaching, sin isn't being re- proved, people aren't being corrected, hardly anyone is being trained in righteousness, and most Christians aren't equipped anymore?

⁶⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

The Jews were in the same boat, and God had struck them. But instead of repenting, they continued down their path of apostasy.⁶⁶

²⁵Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

[For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still] Regardless of Judah's terrible sufferings, God could not turn away His fierce anger unless they repented and returned to Him (cp. Isa. 9:12,17,21; 10:4). See Lev. 26:14-46.⁶⁷

"Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people." This is a strange verse for many who want to talk about just the love of God. The love of God is real, and you cannot keep Him from loving you; but God hates sin, my friend. If you are going to love sin, still He will love you, but you can expect His judgment. The anger of the Lord is kindled against His people -- not against the neighbors.

"But his hand is stretched out still." If Israel had gone to the Lord and trusted Him, He would have delivered them. The judgment of God is in the Book of Isaiah but so is His grace. The government of God and the grace of God -- they are not in conflict. If you are going to continue in sin, if you refuse the grace of God, then you will know what the government of God is. In the rest of this chapter we see an accumulation of the judgment of God.⁶⁸

For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. This phrase introduces a series of punishments that God is going to bring on his people, Judah and Israel. The series of predicted calamities is to begin with Israel first. It is introduced here and is continued in 8:12 below. These warnings are prophetic. They are imminent but have not happened to the nations yet. Here, in the first warning, is the vision of an invading force which leaves many dead bodies in the cities of Israel. It no doubt refers to the invasion of Tiglath-pilezer, king of Assyria when he emptied Galilee and Gilead of its occupants but left Samaria. But that is only the beginning of the series of Woes that are a result of the nation abandoning their faith in God and His word. Those affecting Israel, more than Judah, will be elaborated on in chapters 7 - 12.⁶⁹

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

Assyria now; Babylon later.

⁶⁶ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0501.php>

⁶⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶⁹ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa3-6.htm>

[he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far] Verses 26-30 picture the invasion of Judah by foreign nations. Babylon fulfilled this when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and made the land completely desolate, removing its inhabitants (2Ki. 25; 2Chr. 36; Jer. 25; Dan. 1).

[lift up an ensign to the nations from far] God will lift up a banner for the nations to follow. He controls all nations and they would do His bidding to punish Judah.

[hiss unto them from the end of the earth] In Syria and Palestine bee keepers would hiss and draw bees from their hives into the fields and back into the hives again (Isa. 7:18; 1Ki. 9:8; Job 27:23; Jer. 19:8; 49:17; 50:13; Lam. 2:15-16; Ezek. 27:36; Zeph. 2:15; Zech. 10:8).⁷⁰

5:26-30. When God's judgment would come on Judah, the nations of Egypt and Assyria (7:18), and later Babylon would respond as if God had raised a banner as a signal for war. Those nations would seemingly come from the ends of the earth, a phrase Isaiah used frequently to suggest people everywhere (5:26; 24:16; 40:28; 41:5, 9; 42:10; 43:6; 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; 52:10; 62:11). The soldiers, responding speedily, would be vigorous (5:27) and well armed. Their chariots would be fast (v. 28). Ferocious like lions (v. 29) they would completely devastate Judah (v. 30). They would cover Judah like a sea and blot out the sun like the clouds, a picture of distress and gloom.⁷¹

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

They will be alert to duty.

[girdle of their loins be loosed] Tightening the girdle was necessary with loose garments in order to work or fight.

[latchet of their shoes be broken] The shoes were tied on so there would be no stopping to adjust them, or any risk of losing them in battle.⁷²

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

This pictures the swiftness of the Babylonian armies in war.

⁷⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁷¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

⁷² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

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

[roaring shall be like a lion] The soldiers of Babylon, Assyria, and other nations were taught to enter battle yelling and fighting like demons. Here their noise is said to be like many lions roaring upon their prey, and the roaring of the sea (Isa. 5:29-30).⁷³

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

[darkness and sorrow] A picture of the desolation, sufferings, and hopelessness of Judah after the destruction by Babylon.⁷⁴

Take a good look at the land of Israel today. Many people who have traveled to Israel come back and say, "It certainly is wonderful. We are seeing the fulfillment of prophecy. The land is being reclaimed." They go on and on about how prophecy is being fulfilled. I don't see it that way at all. I see a people still in darkness. I see a people far from God. I see a people who are not living in peace and who need God. They are living in fear and are in great danger in that land today. My heart goes out to them. This is the judgment of God.

Consider the following poem:

Our Prayerless Sin (5:8-30)

We have not wept for thy grief,
Israel, scattered, driven,
Shut up to darkened unbelief
While we have heaven.
We have not prayed for thy peace,
Jerusalem forsaken;
Thy root's increase, by God's great grace,
We age-long have partaken.
How trod thy street our Saviour's feet;
How fell His tears for thee;
How, loving Him, can we forget,
Nor long thy joys to see.
Zion, thy God remembers thee
Though we so hard have been;
Zion, thy God remembers thee,
With blood-bought right to cleanse, may He
Remove our prayerless sin.

-- Selected and revised

God is punishing His own people.⁷⁵

⁷³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁷⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁷⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Looks to the earth: This phrase is similar to the description of those "who dwell in the earth." These both are contrasts between the spiritual and the unspiritual inhabitants of Israel and of the ungodly and godly residents of the nation. Those who look to the earth are contrasted with those who look upward and look to their God and those who dwell in the earth are contrasted with those who dwell in Zion. The former are destined to frustration and misery which will be explained in detail in chapter 8 and the latter will be justified in their faith by the final and intermediated outcomes of the plans that God has for "Zion." Those who trust in Zion will find eternal joy in spite of the difficulties and pain of earthly life. This theme will occur over and over in Isaiah.⁷⁶

Verse 30: This is an introduction to chapter seven: "Light darkened in its overcast:" The picture here is the same one drawn and fulfilled at the same time as that described in the companion verses in 8:22-9:1. The idea of seeking political answers while neglecting to ask and trust in God is seen in both places. In 8:22 "they turn from above" and they "look to the earth" for answers and the result is described in key words that will be used again there as here by Isaiah: "and if one looks to the earth for answers he will see darkness and sorrow, even the light will be darkened in the mists." This is the same picture as the similar words of 8:22: "But they shall look to the earth; and find trouble and darkness, and they shall be driven to darkness and dimness of anguish;" Isaiah gives a general picture here of the anguish to come and then, as almost all the prophetic books do, he begins, as here, supplying limited information, and then elaborates more and more until, as in chapter 8 and 9 where it is finally overwhelmingly apparent that the condition of anguish, darkness, trouble, sorrow, dimness and dead bodies left unburied in the streets is to be brought on the nation by the rise of the Assyrian Empire which is heralded by the invasion of Tiglath-pilezer and his devastation of Damascus and the northern part of the kingdom of Israel. This is the subject of chapters seven through twelve and is introduced here in these words.⁷⁷

"Thus Isaiah ends his preface. The message of the first two sections (1:2-31; 2:1—4:6) is that human sin cannot ultimately frustrate God's purposes and that, in God, mercy triumphs over wrath. But the third section (5:1-30) poses a shattering question: When the Lord has done all (5:4), must the darkness of divine wrath close in and the light flicker and fade? This was the day of crisis in which Isaiah ministered: a crisis for humankind, for the day of wrath has come and a crisis for God: can mercy be exhausted and defeated?"⁷⁸

⁷⁶ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa3-6.htm>

⁷⁷ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa3-6.htm>

⁷⁸ Motyer, p. 73.