

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

THEME:

The Song of the Vineyard and the Six Woes that follow.

REMARKS:

This chapter brings us to the end of the section which was begun in chapter two. This second vision, begun in chapter two and concluded with this chapter, actually forms a synopsis of the entire book of Isaiah.

The Song of the Vineyard is comparable to any Psalm. The vineyard is “**the house of Israel**” (verse 7). The vineyard becomes one of the two figures taken from the botanical world to represent the whole nation of Israel. The fig tree is the other. Our Lord gave a parable of the vineyard before His death which obviously referred to the whole house of Israel (Matthew 21:33-46).

Isaiah announces the imminent captivity of the Northern Kingdom into Assyria and the Southern Kingdom into Babylon. The Lord Jesus Christ showed that God gave them a second chance in the return from the seventy years Babylonian captivity, but the rejection of the Son of God would usher in a more extensive and serious dispersion.

The six woes are the six specific sins which bring down the judgment of God upon the nation. The penalty for each sin is listed. See COMMENT for a detailed analysis of the six sins.

OUTLINE:

1. **The SONG OF THE VINEYARD.** Sins of the Nation Israel and Coming Captivity. Verses 1-7
2. **The SIX WOES.** Six Sins and the Penalties for Each. Verses 8-30

COMMENT:

Verse I—**Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:**

“**My beloved**” is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world.

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

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.

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

He asked them to equate the difference between God and Israel.

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

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

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

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

This is a clear prediction of the forthcoming captivities of both the kingdoms. For over 500 years God had kept the great nations of the world off the land bridge of three continents—Palestine. No great nation had entered their borders and destroyed them. Now God would let the nations of the world in and they would destroy the civilization which had been built over a period of centuries.

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

The vineyard refers to the whole house of Israel as this verse makes crystal clear.

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

This is the first woe leveled against this first sin of Israel.

This sin is the lust of the eye; more specifically, it is covetousness. **“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”** (Colossians 3:5). This is big business expanding at the expense of the little man. The only excuse for such expansion is the insatiable greed for more property and possessions.

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

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

The penalty of God will be a famine which will decimate the crop yield so that the extended holdings will not produce a larger crop.

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

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

This is the second woe which is the second sin.

Drunkenness and pleasure on a national scale are the sins mentioned here. It leads to the deadening of all spiritual perception. Pointedly, these are sins of the flesh. When any nation lowers its morals to the extent that drunkenness and pleasure are on a national scale, then the nation is on the verge of being a prey of the enemy without.

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

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

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

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

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

Captivity is therefore the ultimate penalty for this specific sin.

“**Hell**” refers here to the grave. The glory of a nation goes into the dust because of 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.

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

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

This is the third woe which is the third sin.

This is a picture of a nation giving itself in abandon to sinning without shame or conscience. In verse 19 they defy God to do anything about it. No penalty is mentioned. The very silence here is frightful. 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.

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

This is the fourth woe, and it is likewise the fourth sin against which the fourth woe is leveled.

This is an attempt to destroy God’s standards of right and wrong by substituting man’s values which contradict God’s moral standard. This is the confusion that comes upon a nation when they abandon God after He has blessed the nation in the past for their acknowledgment of Him. (England is a present-day example of this, and America is fast deteriorating in this direction).

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

This is the fifth woe.

The sin here is pride. God hates this above all else (see Proverbs 6:16-17). Here is specifically a pride of the mind (Proverbs 3:0:4). This is the sin of Satan (I Timothy 3:6).

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

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

This is the sixth and last woe.

Here a people became so sodden with drunkenness that they lost their sense of justice.

Injustice and crookedness prevail, and the righteous man is falsely accused. No nation can long survive that drops so low in morals that it loses its sense of values.

Verse 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 castaway the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

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

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

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

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

Verse 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.

Verse 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.

These last woes produce an accumulation of penalties that breaks like a tornado on the nations.

Though the process of deterioration and rottenness is slow and unobserved, the penalty comes like a fire in 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.

OUR PRAYERLESS SIN

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

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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