

## Session 7

# Song of the Vineyard and Woes for Injustice and Falsehood

*Isaiah Oracle by Oracle / Dr. Randy White*

*Isaiah 5:1-30*

### Session Purpose

To examine the vineyard song, the woes against Judah's injustice and moral inversion, and the LORD's summons of nations for judgment.

### Song of the vineyard and its failure (vv.1-7)

- Isaiah's song (vv. 1-2)
  - Up to this point, the only "I" (first person singular pronoun) has been the Lord speaking.
  - In the context of vv. 1-7, "I" here cannot be the Lord, and Isaiah himself is really the only viable option.
  - "My wellbeloved" and "beloved" are not defined in the text, but the terms almost certainly refer to none other than the Lord Himself.
  - "his vineyard" is defined in verse 7.
  - The "very fruitful hill" is almost certainly the promised land.
  - Verse 2 is the heart of the parable-in-song, and is a familiar metaphor for Israel, and the ultimate problem that "it brought forth wild grapes." See also Psalm 80:8-16; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1; Ezekiel 15:1-8; Matthew 21:33-46.
- The LORD speaks directly to Judah (vv. 3-6)
  - Note that He speaks directly to Judah in verse 3, then in third person, about His vineyard in vv. 4-6.
    - \* The words, "betwixt me and my vineyard" require that the first-person singular of verses 1-2 cannot be the same as in vv. 3-6.
    - \* This pattern of direct address followed by an illustration that represents Israel/Judah is a pattern of judicial punishment not uncommon in the Hebrew Scriptures. See also Isaiah 1:21-23; Jeremiah 2:20-21; Ezekiel 16:1-14; Hosea 2:2-13; Micah 6:1-5.
    - \* Isaiah has introduced the drama, the Lord then steps in to take the lead role.
  - The Lord laments His investment in the vineyard (v. 4). He gave it everything, yet only got "wild grapes."

- The Lord threatens to remove all protection and provision (vv. 5-6).
- Verse 7 is the interpretive key, just in case anyone has a question. It is, presumably, spoken by Isaiah.
  - The “vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant” becomes an interpretive key not only for this passage, but also for the vineyard image as it recurs throughout Scripture. See also Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 27:2-6; Jeremiah 2:21; Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 17:1-10; Hosea 10:1; Matthew 21:33-46; John 15:1-6.
- The expectations of the LORD were not met, and this is displayed in a Hebrew wordplay.
  - \* *mishpat* vs. *mispach* - justice vs. bloodshed.
  - \* *tse'daqah* vs. *tse'aqah* - righteousness vs. outcry.

## The vineyard and its injustice (vv.8-10)

- The first woe is against land accumulation and dispossession (v. 8).
  - “House to house” and “field to field” describes the powerful swallowing up the inheritance of others until they are “alone in the midst of the earth.” That is, they become “land hogs,” in disregard to their fellow Israelites.
  - This is not merely wealth, but covenant-land abuse. See also Leviticus 25:23; Micah 2:1-2; Habakkuk 2:9.
- The LORD announces the fitting judgment: the houses gained by injustice will become empty (v. 9).
- The land itself will answer the injustice with barrenness (v. 10).
  - “Ten acres of vineyard producing one bath, and a homer of seed producing an ephah,” pictures severe agricultural failure.
  - The vineyard that should have produced fruit now becomes a sign of futility.

## Woes on indulgence and disregard for the LORD (vv.11-17)

- The second woe is against the pleasure-driven life that begins early and runs late (v. 11).
  - “Rise up early in the morning” and “continue until night” pictures a life organized around indulgence.
  - The problem is not simply wine itself, but a people whose appetites have become their schedule and purpose. See also Proverbs 23:29-35; Amos 6:1-7.
- Their feasting is full of music and celebration, but empty of spiritual regard (v. 12).
  - The harp, viol, tabret, pipe, and wine show that the outward life is lively and cultivated.
  - Yet “they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.”
    - The issue is not that they lacked religious vocabulary, but that they had no serious consideration of what the LORD was doing among them.
- “Therefore” marks the fitting judgment: the people who would not know the LORD’s work will go into captivity “because they have no knowledge” (v. 13).
  - This ignorance is moral and covenantal, not merely informational.
  - The honorable men who feasted will be famished, and the multitude that drank will be dried up with thirst (v. 13). Note that these men were not truly “honorable,” but men who received honor from a godless

- nation.
- Hell, or Sheol, is pictured as enlarging itself to receive them (v. 14).
  - Their glory, multitude, pomp, and rejoicing all descend together.
  - The very things they celebrated become part of the procession into judgment.
  - Many “shall descend into it.” That is, the judgment includes death as well as captivity.
- The judgment humbles every level of society (v. 15).
  - “The mean [average] man” and “the mighty man” are both brought down.
- The eyes of the lofty are humbled, repeating the great theme of Isaiah 2:11-17.
- The LORD of hosts is exalted in judgment, and God is sanctified in righteousness (v. 16).
- The final picture is one of reversal: lambs feed where the wealthy once ruled, and strangers eat in the waste places of the fat ones (v. 17).
  - The land that had been consumed by indulgent men is opened to flocks and outsiders.
  - This continues the vineyard theme: those who misused the LORD’s provision lose the very abundance they trusted.

### Woes on moral inversion and justification of wickedness (vv.18-23)

- The third “woe” is pronounced upon those who “lasso” sin and iniquity (v. 18).
- This group brazenly dared God to hasten His work and show His hand (v. 19).
- Verses 20-23 include three more “woes,” which I am categorizing under the same heading as verses 18-19.
  - The woe upon moral inversion (v. 20).
  - The woe upon those with a lack of personal spiritual discernment (v. 21).
  - The woe upon those consumed by strong drink who “justify the wicked” (that is, call evil good) (vv. 22-23).

### Judgment and anger against the people (vv.24-25)

- “Therefore” gathers the previous woes into one summary judgment (v. 24).
  - As fire consumes stubble and chaff, so their root and blossom will come to nothing.
  - The reason is explicit: “they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”
- The LORD’s anger is kindled against His people (v. 25).
  - His stretched-out hand brings death, trembling mountains, and bodies like refuse in the streets.
  - Yet even this is not the end: “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”

### Summoning nations for swift judgment (vv.26-30)

- The LORD will lift an ensign and hiss for the nations from far away (v. 26).
  - The judgment is not merely internal collapse; the LORD summons outside nations as His instrument.
  - They come “with speed swiftly,” showing that the judgment will not be delayed once the signal is given.
  - The word “hiss” is the Hebrew word *sharaq*, meaning to whistle or hiss as a summons.

- It is used in the opposite direction in Zechariah 10:8, where the Jews hear the “hiss” and return.
- \* The Hebrew word *sharaq* can carry the idea of a whistle as a summons.
  - \* The picture is one of sovereign ease: the Lord gives the summons, and (in this case) Judah’s enemies come.
- The invading force is pictured as tireless, disciplined, and ready (vv. 27-28).
    - None are weary, sleepy, or unprepared.
    - Their arrows, bows, horses, and wheels all speak of military readiness and unstoppable advance.
  - Their coming is compared to the roaring of lions (v. 29).
    - They seize the prey and carry it away, and none can deliver.
    - Judah is pictured as helpless before the nation the LORD has summoned.
  - The chapter ends in darkness and distress (v. 30).
    - The sea-like roar, darkened land, and dimmed heavens show judgment overwhelming the whole scene.
    - The vineyard song that began with expectation now ends with devastation.