

Isaiah 5:1-30

Isaiah 1:2-5:30

1:2-31 – Problematic Zion

- Judgment on Israel
- Call to repentance

2:1-5 – Future Glorious Zion

- The mountain of the LORD exalted
- Nations streaming to learn God's ways
- Peace and instruction from Jerusalem

2:6-22 – Day of Yahweh

- Judgment on human pride and idolatry
- All that is high will be brought low

3:1-4:1 – Leadership Crisis

- Judgment on Judah
- Inversion of power structures

4:2-6 – Future Glory

- The Branch of the LORD will be beautiful
- Survivors will be holy and cleansed
- Divine protection over Mount Zion

5:1-30 – Song of the Vineyard

- Judgment on Judah
- Inversion of power structures

Isaiah 5:1-30 — Overview

Verses 1-7: The Vineyard Song (A)

- A beloved's vineyard that **planted** choice vines but **yielded wild grapes**
- God **looked for** **justice** but found **bloodshed and outcry**

Verses 8-14: Two Woes and Two Therefore (B)

- **Woe** to greedy land-grabbers and indulgent party-goers
- **Therefore** exile and death await the people

Verses 15-17: Divine Justice (C)

- Human pride humbled,
God exalted in **justice** and **righteousness**
- Desolation where the rich once lived

Verses 18-25: Four More Woes and Two Therefore (B')

- **Woe** to the provocative, morally confused, proud, and corrupt
- **Therefore** God's anger burns against His people

Verses 26-30: The Unstoppable Army (A')

- God signals distant nations to come as His instrument of judgment
- **Darkness** and distress cover the land

Isaiah 5:1-7 (A)

The Song of the Vineyard (1-2)

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 and 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 wild grapes** .

The Appeal to Judah (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** ,
why did it **yield wild grapes** ?

The Judgment (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 briers and thorns shall grow up;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

The Interpretation (7)

⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD 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** !

Jesus and the Vineyard Parable

The vineyard imagery in Isaiah 5:1-7 finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus' parable of the wicked tenants in Matthew 21:33-46. Both passages feature a carefully tended vineyard that fails to produce proper fruit for its owner.

[Detailed comparison between Isaiah's vineyard song and Jesus' parable, highlighting themes of covenant faithfulness, judgment, and the rejection of God's messengers.]

Expectation vs Reality

The Hebrew term for "wild grapes" (בְּאִשִּׁים - be'ushim) literally means "stinking things" or "rotten fruit." This wordplay emphasizes not just the failure to produce good fruit, but the production of something actively offensive and putrid.

[Explanation of how Israel's injustice and oppression are not merely the absence of righteousness, but actively corrupt practices that stink before God.]

Verse 7 contains a masterful Hebrew wordplay that is impossible to capture in English translation. Robert Alter notes the phonetic similarity between the expected and actual outcomes:

*"He hoped for justice,
and, look, jaundice,
for righteousness,
and, look, wretchedness."*

— Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*

[Discussion of how this wordplay emphasizes the stark contrast between God's expectations and Israel's reality.]

"What More Could God Do?"

The rhetorical question in verse 4 strikes at the heart of theodicy and divine justice. God challenges both Israel and the reader to consider whether His judgment is justified given His abundant provision and care.

[Theological discussion of God's complete provision for Israel, the implications of the rhetorical question for understanding divine judgment, and applications for understanding God's expectations today.]

Isaiah 5:8-14 (B)

First Woe: Greed (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.
- A** ⁹ The LORD 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.”

Second Woe: Indulgence (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!
- B** ¹² They have lyre and harp,
 tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts,
but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD,
 or **see the work of his hands** .

Two Therefore (13-14)

- ¹³ **Therefore** my people go into exile
 for lack of knowledge;
B' their honored men go hungry,
 and their multitude is parched with thirst.
- ¹⁴ **Therefore** Sheol has enlarged its appetite
A' and opened its mouth beyond measure,
 and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down,
 her revelers and he who exults in her.

Isaiah 5:15-17 (C)

- ¹⁵ Man is humbled, and each one is brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are brought low.
- ¹⁶ But the LORD of hosts is exalted in **justice** ,
and the Holy God shows himself holy in **righteousness** .
- ¹⁷ Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture,
and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.

Isaiah 5:18-25 (B')

Third Woe: Provocation (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 it ;
let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
and let it come, that we may know it!"

Fourth Woe: Moral Confusion (20)

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!

Fifth Woe: Pride (21)

²¹ **Woe** to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!

Sixth Woe: Corruption (22-23)

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** !

Two Therefores (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 the law of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.
²⁵ **Therefore** the anger of the LORD 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,⁸
and his hand is stretched out still.

Isaiah 5:26-30 (A')

- 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.