

A SONG OF A VINEYARD

BIBLE TEXT : Isaiah 5:1-30

LESSON 349 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Isaiah 5:1-30

¹ 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:

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.

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

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?

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:

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.

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.

⁸ Woe unto them that join house to house, *that* lay field to field, till

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

God's Peculiar Treasure

God loved His chosen people, the Israelites. One time He called them His "peculiar treasure" (Psalm 135:4). He said, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4). When the nation of Israel had come out of Egyptian bondage, God said, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Exodus 19:4). How He loved Israel!

But Israel had ungratefully turned away from that love, and had worshiped idols instead of God. They did not appreciate all the good things He had done for them; and they refused to obey Him.

Isaiah's Song

One day God told the Prophet Isaiah to remind the Israelites in a song of what He had done for them. "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard." Jesus was God's "wellbeloved," and he compared Israel with a vineyard on a fruitful hill, a vineyard with a fence around it.

God had given Israel the Land of Canaan, and had told them exactly where the boundaries were. The boundaries were the fence that Isaiah sang about. The land had first been promised to Abraham; and later, during the reign of King Solomon, most of it had been occupied. If the Israelites had obeyed God, no one could ever have taken it from them.

God had taken the "stones" (or the heathen) out of the "vineyard." He had driven out the heathen nations ahead of the Israelites when they came into Canaan. God wanted the Israelites alone to live there. If they had done as he asked them to do, they would have had a prosperous life, conquering every enemy.

Wild Grapes

God considered His people His "choicest vine." He had planted them especially in the Land of Canaan, and offered them every advantage in life. But because Israel turned her back upon God, He had to say, "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." How disappointing!

Think how you would have felt if you had gone to all the trouble of clearing some land of stones, picking up each one by hand; then had built a fence around the land and had planted it with choice vines and had prepared the winepress to process the fruit; then after all that work, when you came to harvest your crop you found only wild grapes. You would have nothing in return for all your hard work and money spent. It would be worthless. You would feel like doing just what the One in the song did: tear down the fence and let the weeds and animals take the place.

Fair Judgment

God very fairly asks Israel and Judah to judge the case: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" Can you think of anything else he could have done to make this a fruitful vineyard?

Can you think of anything else God could have done to His

there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

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

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

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!

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.

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.

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.

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:

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

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

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

¹⁹ That say, Let him make speed, *and* hasten his work, that we may see *it*: and let the counsel of the

people Israel to make them a prosperous nation? He brought them out of Egypt when they were but a nation of slaves; He placed them in a fruitful land that was already planted, and gave them houses to live in that were already built. He drove out their enemies ahead of them. He told them they would be the head, and the other nations the tail. He gave them a religion of reality, a God who heard their prayers and answered. All this God had done for His people.

Then when God wanted them to do something for Him — preach salvation to the world — they refused and worshiped idols. They forgot God, and their hearts were only evil continually. They were not even kind to one another. “He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” Their lives became as barren as the land was when God withheld rain.

No Rain

God had warned them when they left Egypt of what would happen if they turned from Him . One thing was that He would withhold rain. God lets it rain when he wants to; and if He holds it back, we have no rain. Nothing can grow if there is no water, so the land of Canaan became wasteland. No one cared to live there, and the Israelites (later called the Jews) moved away. Arabs had difficulty finding even enough grass for their horses and camels, and many of them just folded their tents and moved on. So what was to have been a fruitful vineyard became a fruitless desert. For many hundreds of years the land of Palestine lay idle, as a punishment for the Israelites’ rejection of Christ.

God’s Love for Us

Now let us consider what God has done for us. He sent His own beloved Son, Jesus, to die for us. His law is, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Everyone has committed a sin at some time and deserves to die, but Jesus offered to die in our place. Think how grateful we should be that Jesus was willing to take our punishment. But we must be willing to come and be saved, or we shall have to suffer punishment.

There are a great many people today who refuse to be saved. Jesus is weeping over them as He wept over rebellious Jerusalem: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37). Again he is asking, “What could have been done more . . . that I have not done?” What more could Jesus do to bring sinners to repentance and give them a place in Heaven?

Our Instruction

Jesus came to earth to show men how to live. The Bible tells us how He lived, and he wants us to be like Him. We cannot say that we do not know how to conduct ourselves. He gave us His written Word to teach us in every matter of life.

Then through His death on Calvary, and the Blood that He shed, He gave us power to live without sin. What more could He have done?

Dying for His Enemies

You sometimes hear of someone giving his life for his friend. But you would not expect a man to die for his enemy. Jesus did. The Apostle Paul tells us: “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: . . . But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7,8). Jesus died for His enemies because He loved them and wanted them to be saved.

Should we not hasten to answer His call? He has done what He could to save us from eternal hell. He is calling: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be

Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know *it!*

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!

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

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

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

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.

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.

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:

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:

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

as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Punishment for Disobedience

The judgments that God pronounced on Israel will come upon every one who turns from Him. He said: "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!" Some people think there is nothing wrong with drinking intoxicating drinks if they do not drink too much; but the prophet also said, "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." Even if they were strong enough to drink without getting drunk, it still was wrong. Hell has enlarged itself to take care of such sinners, and many others.

God said hell was originally planned for the devil and his angels: but if people refuse to be saved, they too will have to go there.

God pronounced a woe also upon the people who call good evil, and evil good. There are many evils today which people call respectable sins. But remember that if God says something is wrong, it is wrong, regardless of what people say about it.

God also pronounces a woe upon people who are bribed to cover up sin -- those who "justify the wicked for reward." When we read of the sins of Israel's time, the picture is the same as that of men's sins today. "Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people."

We do not want any of these judgments and woes to come upon us, so let us give our hearts to God while we are young. Let us walk carefully all the days of our life, in obedience to His Word, so that we shall enjoy the blessings here on earth and those He has gone to prepare for those who love Him.

QUESTIONS

1. With what is Israel compared in the song?
2. Describe what God had done for His vineyard.
3. What did He find when He looked for fruit?
4. To what did the "stones" refer?
5. What was the punishment upon the vineyard?
6. What has Jesus done for us?
7. Why has hell "enlarged herself"?
8. Name some of the things God pronounced woes against.
9. Who was to judge between God and His vineyard?

and their wheels like a whirlwind:

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*.

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.