

THE PUNISHMENT OF JUDAH FORETOLD

BIBLE TEXT : Isaiah 5:1-30

LESSON 349 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isaiah 2:19).

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 briers 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:

I The Lord's Vineyard

1. The Lord's vineyard was planted on a fruitful hill and nourished with loving care, Isaiah 5:1, 2;

Psalm 80:8-9

⁸ Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

⁹ Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

Psalm 80:15

¹⁵ And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

2. The Lord waited for fruit, but the vineyard brought forth wild grapes, Isaiah 5:3, 4;

Jeremiah 2:21

²¹ Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

3. The Lord decreed that the vineyard should be wasted, Isaiah 5:5, 6;

Psalm 80:12

¹² Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

Psalm 80:13

¹³ The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

4. This vineyard of the Lord was the house of Israel, and Judah was the pleasant plant, Isaiah 5:7.

II Desolation of the Wicked

1. Woe and destitution were pronounced against covetousness, Isaiah 5:8-10;

Exodus 20:17

¹⁷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

Habakkuk 2:9

⁹ Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

Luke 12:15

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Colossians 3:5

⁵ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

2. Drunkenness came up for a reckoning before God, Isaiah 5:11-13, 22, 23;

Leviticus 10:9

⁹ Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations:

Proverbs 20:1

¹ Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

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

Proverbs 23:29-31

²⁹ Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

³⁰ They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

³¹ Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.

Luke 21:34

³⁴ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

Romans 13:13

¹³ Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

3. Hell hath enlarge herself to receive the wicked, Isaiah 5:14.

4. Evil workers and proud men came into judgment, Isaiah 5:15, 17-21;

Proverbs 16:18

¹⁸ Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 21:4

⁴ An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin.

Luke 1:52

⁵² He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

1 John 2:16

¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Malachi 4:1

¹ For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

III God's Judgments

1. The Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, Isaiah 5:16;

Revelation 20:11-15

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

2. God had ample cause for which to judge the Children of Israel, Isaiah 5:24, 25.

3. God used the nations from afar as instruments of judgment, Isaiah 5:26-30.

NOTES:

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). The Lord addressed this message to the Children of Israel; but, because Jesus, the Lamb, was "slain from the foundation of the world," this includes the people of the whole

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 carcases *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, 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

world. The way into Heaven is open unto all. As the Children of Israel were required to make an individual choice whether to serve God or not to serve Him, so each individual must decide for himself whether he chooses eternal life or eternal death. The man who wants to live throughout eternity in God's Heaven must seek God's salvation and live according to God's Word while on earth. Each man thus becomes the architect of his own eternal destiny.

The Lord's Vineyard

"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" (Isaiah 5:1). The very fruitful hill was none other than Canaan, the Promised Land given to the Israelite slaves whom God had freed from the cruel iron yoke of the Egyptians. The stones, the heathen idolatrous tribes in Canaan before the Children of Israel came, were certainly removed through the power of God as the Children of Israel took up their possession. Any of the heathen who remained in the land that God gave to Israel were there because the Children of Israel failed in their part to do and keep the whole of God's commandments.

The Lord fenced His vineyards with Truth, to keep the heathen nations from overrunning His tender plantings. "It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: . . . The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee on way, and flee before thee seven ways" (Deuteronomy 28:1, 7).

A tower was built in the midst of the Lord's vineyard. The towers of those early days were built as a place of safety in time of war or danger. They were built high so that a watchman placed on the tower's summit might see enemies approaching. The towers were built strong and secure to ward off the attacks of the enemy when he tried to overcome the owner of the vineyard. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord became a place of great safety to the Children of Israel, especially during the times when they served the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength. (**Isaiah 37:14-23**)

¹⁴ And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. ¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying, ¹⁶ O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. ¹⁷ Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. ¹⁸ Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, ¹⁹ And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. ²⁰ Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only. ²¹ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: ²² This *is* the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. ²³ Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 37:33-36 ³³ Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank

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.

against it. ³⁴ By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD. ³⁵ For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. ³⁶ Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses).

The Lord told the house of Israel that they were His vineyard – that the men of Judah were God's pleasant plant. The Lord had a right to expect a fruitful harvest from His endeavours, and had the Children of Israel served God faithfully such a harvest would have been forthcoming. "Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Psalm 93:13, 14). There was nothing wrong with God's planting. "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed."

Song of Judgment

"How then art thou turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" (Jeremiah 2:21). Isaiah's song of judgment pointed out the fact that the Lord had done everything possible to make His vineyard a fruitful one; but when he sought the harvest, He found that the vineyard had brought forth only wild grapes. The Children of Israel, as a whole, refused to serve God. Seemingly they preferred to trifle with sin and idolatry, only to face a justly angry God in judgment. The Children of Israel knew that Heaven awaited those who faithfully serve God on earth, and they likewise knew that hell was the unavoidable end of an unfaithful, sinful life; yet most of the Israelites chose to continue in sin. Can anyone imagine a more unwise choice?

What was to be done to the unfruitful vineyard? The Lord foretold that the protective hedge would be removed, and the vineyard would be eaten – the wall would be broken down, and the vineyard trampled. The blessings of the Lord were removed from the nation of Israel and they were soon scattered to the four corners of the earth. The Lord withheld the rains from the land, and soon the beautiful countryside became a parched wilderness. The pleasant plant of the Lord's fruitful hill became an exceedingly dry tree; and, were it not for the Lord's mercy and covenant, the Children of Israel would have become extinct. Through the prophet, God mentioned a few of the sins of which the Children of Israel were guilty, and even the most severe critic would have to admit that God had a reason for executing His severe judgments against this ungodly people.

Changing Scenes

The word picture that the prophet at this time gave of the Children of Israel is a very grim description to read or hear. Would God that this one judgment of sin had been sufficient to warn all sinners to flee from the wrath of the Almighty and turn to sincerely serve the true and living God.

Change the title of the picture from the Israelites to Gentiles, and today's scene would be very much the same. Under the Dispensation of Grace, the Spirit of God has been directed largely to the Gentiles. The Lord has made every provision for the salvation of all men, but God has made man a free moral agent, giving him the responsibility of choosing between eternal life and eternal death. God has done everything within His power to bring the children of men to repentance; but on the whole they are still rejecting His call of mercy. The judgments that the Lord spoke against rebellious Israel will come upon the Gentiles who fail to repent of sin and receive the grace of God into their hearts.

Selfishness

The Lord pronounced a woe upon the covetous men of Israel, but the judgment of Israel's sin did not eradicate the sin from the world. Men are still covetous, and God is just as much grieved with this sin as ever. Jesus told His audience: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). The world so often measures success merely by worldly possessions and achievement, but God measures the success of a man by spiritual possessions and attainments. There is a vast difference.

Another sin of selfishness that the Lord condemns today, as well as in Israel's day, is the sin of drunkenness. Statistics show that billions of Naira a year is spent on alcoholic beverages, by people who, in the main part, can ill afford such profitless, damaging indulgence. Families, little children, go without food and the necessities of life because the father or mother or both spend the family income on liquor and debauchery. There are millions identified alcoholics in Nigeria. Millions more are social drinkers whose judgment, impaired by liquor, causes accidents resulting in death to hundreds on our highways. The Word of God, which never fails, declares the fate of drunkards: "Murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21).

Enlargement of Hell

So great is the wickedness of man, and so widespread, that God spoke to the prophet: "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" (Isaiah 5:14). Hell was not originally designed for man, but it was prepared "for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). It has been said, however, that the man who insists upon living like the devil lives will have to be content with the wages which the devil pays. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

The counterpart of Israel's sins can plainly be seen among men today. Just as surely as God judged Israel's sins, He will judge the sins in the heart and life of every sinful Gentile. "Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). Again the Lord is saying to all: "Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

QUESTIONS

1. Who was the Lord's vineyard?
2. In what way did the Lord protect His vineyard?
3. What corresponded to the tower that the prophet described?
4. What did the Lord find when He looked for fruit in His vineyard?
5. What happened to the Lord's vineyard? Why?
6. In what way was Israel's covetousness punished?
7. What does the Lord say about drunkenness?
8. Why has hell enlarged herself?