



Isaiah 5:1-30

Isaiah's Love Song and the Ramifications of Her Sin

The fifth chapter of Isaiah divided into two distinct sections, yet the whole of the chapter flows together with one train of thought.

The first section is actually a song that Isaiah sings concerning Israel as God's vineyard. The first couple verses reflect upon the condition of the vineyard. The next couple verses are God's response to the desperate condition of the vineyard He planted.

The second section (v. 8-30) is comprised of the indictments that come from God in the form of "woes." These indictments are a result of the "bad fruit" that came out of Israel's vineyard. The woes are direct, forceful and yet there is compassion woven in there as well. It is not difficult for us to imagine how it would feel to have these words spoken to us. This is an intensely personal encounter with a loving God who is unwilling to give up on His people.

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 5:1 Now I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a rich and fertile hill. ² He plowed the land, cleared its stones, and planted it with the best vines. In the middle he built a watchtower and carved a winepress in the nearby rocks. Then he waited for a harvest of sweet grapes, but the grapes that grew were bitter.</p>	<p>a 5:1 It is proper, even as we honor God for his transcendence and holiness, to love him and sing about his love. Divine romance never diminishes God's glory; it elevates and extols it. Isaiah is a singing prophet, as many prophets are. This chapter contains three prophetic songs: The Song of the Vineyard (vv. 1–7), the Song of Woes (vv. 8–23), and the Song of Judgment (vv. 24–30). What a variety of methods God will use to awaken his people and bring people to repentance! The prophet sings this song to the glory of his Beloved. Maybe it was sung by Isaiah at the Feast of Tabernacles when the grape harvest was brought in. Or perhaps Isaiah walked through the streets of Jerusalem or the hillsides of Israel singing to God's people this prophetic message. Or perhaps the Lord Jesus himself sang this over Jerusalem as he stood on the hillside overlooking the city, weeping (Luke 19:41)."</p> <p>b 5:2 Israel is the vineyard of the Lord (Jer. 2:21). The parable is an obvious picture of how God planted and loved his vineyard, Israel. He cleared it of stones, removing all that would make his people stumble (Isa. 62:10). With the stones, he built a wall of protection around them (5:5). For Israel, these stones would represent the Canaanites, those inhabitants of the land who made them stumble. Then he planted and established his people, calling them the choicest ("noblest") of vines, with everything they needed to grow and be fruitful. In John 15, his vineyard is described as God's redeemed people, the church. He has removed our stony hearts and given us hearts of flesh to respond to his voice. Throughout the Gospels, we see the people of the Lord compared to a vineyard (Matt. 20:1; 21:28–41; Mark 12:1; Luke 13:6; 20:9–16; John 15:1).</p> <p>c 5:2 For Israel, this watchtower would be Jerusalem, the place where the owner of the vineyard dwelt and cared for his vineyard. For the church, the watchtower is the Zion-realm, the place of his presence. He not only planted us as his vineyard, he dwells among us (2 Cor. 6:16). The winepress or wine vat is the sacrificial system that God gave to his people to provide them with access to himself. For believers today, the wine vat is the privilege of open access that the Holy Spirit (our wine) provides for us as we gather together.</p>	<p>Isaiah 5:1 Let me sing a song for the one I love, called a "My Lover and His Vineyard": My beloved planted a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² First he dug up its ground and hauled away its stones b so he could plant within it the choicest of vines. He built a watchtower in the middle of it and carved a winepress out of its rock. c He fully expected it to bear good grapes, but instead it produced only worthless wild grapes.</p>

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<p>³ Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah, you judge between me and my vineyard.</p> <p>⁴ What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not already done? When I expected sweet grapes, why did my vineyard give me bitter grapes?</p> <p>⁵ Now let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will tear down its hedges and let it be destroyed. I will break down its walls and let the animals trample it. ⁶ I will make it a wild place where the vines are not pruned and the ground is not hoed, a place overgrown with briars and thorns. I will command the clouds to drop no rain on it.</p> <p>⁷ The nation of Israel is the vineyard of the LORD of Heaven's Armies. The people of Judah are his pleasant garden. He expected a crop of justice, but instead he found oppression. He expected to find righteousness, but instead he heard cries of violence.</p> <p>⁸ What sorrow for you who buy up house after house and field after field, until everyone is evicted and you live alone in the land. ⁹ But I have heard the LORD of Heaven's Armies swear a solemn oath: "Many houses will stand deserted; even beautiful mansions will be empty. ¹⁰ Ten acres of vineyard will not produce even six gallons of wine. Ten baskets of seed will yield only one basket of grain."</p>	<p>d 5:5 As translated from the Septuagint. The Hebrew ba'ar is a homophone that could be translated "(a place of) grazing" or "burning."</p> <p>e 5:5 Or "I will break through its wall."</p> <p>f 5:6 Or "It will not be pruned or hoed." We would become a wasteland if God were to lift his favor and blessings from our lives.</p> <p>g 5:6 Clouds giving rain is a metaphor for blessing. Rain is often a picture of revelation teaching that falls on our hearts like rain.</p> <p>h 5:7 Or "the planting of his pleasantness."</p> <p>i 5:7 There are remarkable plays on words found in the Hebrew. The Hebrew word for "justice" is mishpat, and "bloodshed" is mishpakh. "Fairness" is zedakah, and "cries of distress" is zeakah.</p> <p>j 5:8 This verse is not a prohibition on real estate endeavors but the greedy accumulation of houses and land at the expense of the poor. This is the first of six woes found in this chapter (vv. 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22).</p> <p>k 5:9 Or "For the ears of the Lord of Hosts heard these things" (LXX)."</p> <p>l 5:10 Or "a ten-yoke vineyard," the amount of land ten yoke of oxen could cultivate.</p> <p>m 5:10 Or "A homer of seed will produce only an ephah." The land-hungry people will go hungry."</p>	<p>³ So now, you residents of Jerusalem and people of Judah, you be the judges!</p> <p>⁴ What more could I have done for my vineyard? When I expected it to bear luscious grapes, why did it produce only wild, worthless grapes? ⁵ So let me tell you what I am about to do to my vineyard. I will tear down its fence and it will be plundered. d I will break down its wall e and it will be destroyed! ⁶ I will make it a wasteland, and no one will cultivate the land. f It will grow only weeds and thorns! I will command the clouds and they will not drop their rain upon it! g ⁷ For Israel is this vineyard of Yahweh, the Commander of Angel Armies, and the people of Judah are the garden of his delight. h When he waited for a crop of justice, he got a harvest of bloodshed! When he waited to reap fairness, he heard only the cries of victims. i</p> <p>Isaiah's Song of Six Woes</p> <p>#1 – Grasping Materialism</p> <p>⁸ Woe to those who in their greed buy up house after house to make one grand estate until there is no place for anyone else and only the landowner is left! j ⁹ This is what Yahweh, the Commander of Angel Armies, said in my ears: k "Truly, many of your houses will become devastated and your large, impressive mansions will have no one living in them! ¹⁰ Indeed, even a vast vineyard l will produce only a few gallons of wine, and several bushels of seed will produce only a bushel of harvest!" m</p>

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<p>¹¹ What sorrow for those who get up early in the morning looking for a drink of alcohol and spend long evenings drinking wine to make themselves flaming drunk. ¹² They furnish wine and lovely music at their grand parties—lyre and harp, tambourine and flute—but they never think about the LORD or notice what he is doing.</p> <p>¹³ So my people will go into exile far away because they do not know me. Those who are great and honored will starve, and the common people will die of thirst. ¹⁴ The grave is licking its lips in anticipation, opening its mouth wide. The great and the lowly and all the drunken mob will be swallowed up. ¹⁵ Humanity will be destroyed, and people brought down; even the arrogant will lower their eyes in humiliation. ¹⁶ But the LORD of Heaven's Armies will be exalted by his justice. The holiness of God will be displayed by his righteousness.</p> <p>¹⁷ In that day lambs will find good pastures, and fattened sheep and young goats will feed among the ruins.</p> <p>¹⁸ What sorrow for those who drag their sins behind them with ropes made of lies, who drag wickedness behind them like a cart! ¹⁹ They even mock God and say, "Hurry up and do something! We want to see what you can do. Let the Holy One of Israel carry out his plan, for we want to know what it is."</p>	<p>n 5:12 See 1 Sam. 12:24.</p> <p>o 5:13 See Prov. 10:21; Isa. 1:3; Hos. 4:6.</p> <p>p 5:13 Or "men of glory."</p> <p>q 5:13 How ironic! Their thirst for strong drink was their downfall; now they have nothing to drink at all.</p> <p>r 5:14 Or Sheol, a poetic term for the underworld.</p> <p>s 5:14 See Hab. 2:5.</p> <p>t 5:15 Or "The eyes of pride are brought low."</p> <p>u 5:18 Or "cords of emptiness."</p> <p>v 5:18 Or "pulling your sins with cart ropes." See Ps. 129:4; Prov. 5:22; Rom. 6:16.</p> <p>w 5:19 Or "his work," which, in the immediate context, is his judgment.</p> <p>x 5:19 See Jer. 17:15; Ezek. 12:22–25; 2 Peter 2:3–7.</p> <p>y 5:20 Their moral code is reversed as sin is accepted as something good. Not content to abandon what is good, they must label it as evil. Those who abandon the absolute standards of God's Word will find a reversal of every true virtue. Good is mocked and evil is embraced. Light is ridiculed and darkness is worn like a cloak. The sweetness[...]"</p>	<p>#2 – Drunken Pleasure-Seeking</p> <p>¹¹ Woe to those who start drinking early in the morning, lingering late into the night to get drunk with wine. ¹² Their lavish parties are complete with the music of harps and flutes—and the wine flows! Yet they have no respect for what Yahweh has done, nor do they contemplate the work of his hands! n</p> <p>¹³ Therefore, my people go into exile for lack of understanding. o Their leaders p are starving, their multitudes parched with thirst. q ¹⁴ The shadowy realm of death r grows thirsty for souls and opens its mouth even wider to drink in the people! It gulps down the leaders of Jerusalem, along with their noisy, boasting crowds! s ¹⁵ The people will be humiliated, all of humanity humbled, and the arrogant will be brought low. t ¹⁶ With justice the Lord Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies, displays his greatness, and righteousness sets him apart as the holy God. ¹⁷ Then lambs will graze, as if in their own pastures, and the refugee will eat in the ruins of the rich.</p> <p>#3 – Defiant Sinfulness</p> <p>¹⁸ Woe to those who drag behind them their guilt with ropes made of lies—u straining and tugging, harnessed to their bondage! v ¹⁹ They say, "May God hurry up and bring his judgment w so that we can see it once and for all! Let the prophetic plan of the Holy One of Israel quickly come to pass so that we can see what it is!" x</p> <p>#4 – Perversion of Values</p> <p>²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who replace darkness with light and light with darkness, who replace bitter with sweet and sweet with bitter. y</p>

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<p>²⁰ What sorrow for those who say that evil is good and good is evil, that dark is light and light is dark, that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter. ²¹ What sorrow for those who are wise in their own eyes and think themselves so clever. ²² What sorrow for those who are heroes at drinking wine and boast about all the alcohol they can hold. ²³ They take bribes to let the wicked go free, and they punish the innocent.</p> <p>²⁴ Therefore, just as fire licks up stubble and dry grass shrivels in the flame, so their roots will rot and their flowers wither. For they have rejected the law of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies; they have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. ²⁵ That is why the LORD’s anger burns against his people, and why he has raised his fist to crush them. The mountains tremble, and the corpses of his people litter the streets like garbage. But even then the LORD’s anger is not satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike!</p> <p>²⁶ He will send a signal to distant nations far away and whistle to those at the ends of the earth. They will come racing toward Jerusalem. ²⁷ They will not get tired or stumble. They will not stop for rest or sleep. Not a belt will be loose, not a sandal strap broken.</p> <p>²⁸ Their arrows will be sharp and their bows ready for battle. Sparks will fly from their horses’ hooves, and the wheels of their chariots will spin like a whirlwind. ²⁹ They will roar like lions, like the strongest of lions. Growling, they will pounce on their victims and carry them off, and no one will be there to rescue them.³⁰ They will roar over their victims on that day of destruction like the roaring of the sea. If someone looks across the land, only darkness and distress will be seen; even the light will be darkened by clouds.</p>	<p>z 5:21 See Prov. 3:7; Isa. 29:14. Who will outwit Eternal Wisdom? Who can outsmart Infinite Intelligence? God will resist the proud of heart. The wisdom that comes from above is without pride (James 3:13–16).</p> <p>aa 5:23 Or “The righteousness of the righteous they take from them.” Verses 22 and 23 are Isaiah’s use of sarcasm, pointed to the leaders of the nation. The ones who should be champions and heroes are only “great” in their self-indulgence. With perverted justice, they corrupt the nation instead of safeguarding society.</p> <p>ab 5:24 See Num. 22:4.</p> <p>ac 5:24 Some see the roots and flowers (blossoms) as a metaphor for parents and children.</p> <p>ad 5:25 God’s anger is a righteous anger. It is the necessary vindication of the honor of his holiness and authority. There is no reason to make an apology for God’s anger. It is not a blemish on his divine character nor inconsistent with his mercy and grace. His anger is as pure and holy and good as his mercy or his love. “Everything about God is holy and perfect. See Deut. 32:39–41; Ps. 7:11–13.</p> <p>ae 5:25 This could be a reference to the days of King Uzziah and the great earthquakes that took place during his reign. See Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5.</p> <p>af 5:26 Or “hisses.”</p> <p>ag 5:27 Or “Their belts don’t come loose, nor are their sandal straps broken.” This is a metaphor for being prepared and ready for action. Eastern people of that day wore long, loose garments that left them unprepared for action. But a belt (girdle) fastened meant they were ready for war. Their sandals unbroken meant that nothing would hinder them.</p> <p>ah 5:30 Much of this verse is uncertain in the Hebrew. The Septuagint reads, “And these will look up to the heaven and down to the earth.”</p> <p>ai 5:30 Or “the gloomy vapor” (Syriac and Vulgate). There is a sense in which Jesus endured all the judgments of this chapter for us, becoming our Savior to set us free. Even the sun hid its face from the suffering Christ while he was on the cross.”</p>	<p>#5 - Arrogant Conceit</p> <p>²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and see themselves as clever and shrewd. z</p> <p>#6 - Injustice</p> <p>²² Woe to the champion wine drinkers who are heroes in mixing strong drinks— ²³ judges and politicians who acquit the guilty for a bribe and take away the rights of the innocent. aa Isaiah’s Song of Judgment ²⁴ Therefore, just as tongues of fire lick up the straw and dry grass, ab they will be destroyed, just as a plant with decaying roots and blossoms dries up like dust and is blown away in the wind. ac For they said, “No!” to the teachings of Yahweh, the Lord of Angel Armies, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel!²⁵ For this reason Yahweh’s anger burned against his people, ad and he struck them down with his holy hand! The mountains trembled, ae and dead bodies were littered like garbage left in the streets. Even with this, his anger has not turned away and still his hand is heavy upon them!</p> <p>²⁶ He will lift up a banner to signal the distant nations; “he whistles af for them to come from the ends of the earth. Look! Here they come, running swiftly and speedily! ²⁷ Not one warrior stumbles or grows weary—not even stopping to rest or sleep; they are battle ready! ag ²⁸ Their arrows are sharpened and every bow strung. Their horses’ hooves are hard as flint and their chariot wheels turn like the whirlwind. ²⁹ Their shout is like a lion’s roar, the roar of strong lions growling as they seize their prey. They carry away captives, and none can rescue them.</p> <p>³⁰ They will roar and roar on that day like the roaring of crashing waves, and if you look back across the land you’ll see only darkness, disaster, and distress; ah daylight itself will be obscured by thick clouds. ai”</p>

- **Commentary: Bible Knowledge Commentary**, John A. Martin

• **THE WORTHLESS VINEYARD** (5:1-7)

- In the first stanza (vv. 1-2) of this song which Isaiah composed he sang about God's care for His vineyard and the condition of the vineyard. The second stanza (vv. 3-6) details what God said in view of her condition. In the third stanza (v. 7) the vineyard in the figure is identified. Elsewhere God referred to Israel as a vineyard (3:14; Ps. 80:8-18; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 15:6-8; Hosea 10:1).
- 5:1-2. In his song Isaiah pictured his loved One (i.e., God), planting a vineyard on a fertile hillside, removing the stones (of which there are many in Israel!) and planting only the best vines. He built a watchtower, a stone structure from which to guard the vineyard (cf. "shelter," 1:8). And He made a winepress in anticipation of producing good wine. However, only poor grapes grew on His vines.
- 5:3-6. The words in these verses in the song are "spoken" by God. He asked the people of Judah to judge the situation. They were to tell whether the bad grapes were the fault of the vineyard Owner. Though God could have done nothing more to make the vineyard productive (v. 4) there was one thing He would now do: He would let it be destroyed (vv. 5-6). By removing the protective hedge ... its wall (probably of stone) around it, He would allow animals (including foxes, Song 2:15) to enter and destroy it. Without cultivating the vines, thorn bushes would grow up and smother them. Nor would God let rain fall on the vineyard. Because of the nation's sinful actions (their bad fruit), destruction would come. Without God's protection Judah would be ruined.
- 5:7. The vineyard in this song is identified as Israel and Judah. As elsewhere in Isaiah, "Israel" is sometimes a synonym for the Southern Kingdom (Neh. 1:6; 13:3). Delighting in His people, God wanted good fruit, that is, justice and righteousness (cf. comments on Isa. 1:21). Instead He saw only bloodshed (cf. 1:15) and heard cries of distress. Because of its "bad grapes" (injustice) most people would be killed or taken into captivity. Isaiah used two interesting cases of assonance (similarity in word sounds) to stress the contrast between what God expected in His people and what happened to them. "Justice" was replaced with "bloodshed", and instead of "righteousness" there was "distress".

• **AN INDICTMENT ON SIN** (5:8-30)

- Though verses 8-30 are not a part of the song in verses 1-7, they fit into Isaiah's train of thought nicely because their six indictments ("woes") are against the "bad fruit" the nation had been producing. Between the second and third woes God referred to the consequences of Judah's sins (vv. 13-17); after the sixth woe He did a similar thing (vv. 24-30).

- **Woe to materialists (5:8-10)**

- 5:8-10. Each of the six indictments is introduced by Woe. Some people were acquiring much land at the expense of their fellow countrymen (cf. Micah 2:1-2). Selling houses permanently in a walled city was allowed under the Law, but selling houses in unwalled cities and fields was allowed only until the Year of Jubilee when the houses would revert back to their former owners. Because God had given the people the land they were not to get rich at others' expense. Because of this sin the big houses and mansions the people once enjoyed would be empty, for many people would be killed and, as noted in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 28:20-24), their crops would fail. Normally a large vineyard would produce many gallons of wine, but here the amount would be a mere six gallons (a bath). And six bushels (a homer) of seed would normally yield scores of bushels of grain, but ironically the grain would be only one-half a bushel (an ephah), just 1/12 the amount of seed sown!

- **Woe to drunkards (5:11-12)**

- 5:11-12. Apparently heavy consumption of wine was prevalent in Isaiah's day for this sin is mentioned in two of the six woes (cf. v. 22). People were so addicted to wine that, unlike most drunkards, they rose early in the morning to drink. They also stayed up late at night. In their revelry they enjoyed music at their banquets, but cared nothing for the deeds of the LORD. Their lack of respect for the work of His hands meant they abused other people made in the image of God. Caring only for their own pleasures, they had no concern for the Lord or for others.

- **Results of Judah's lifestyle (5:13-17)**

- 5:13-17. Because of Judah's lifestyle she would experience several results, the worst being exile. Included in that experience would be death by hunger and thirst (v. 13). Many would die, both nobles and masses, since death has no respect for rank (v. 14). The carousing drunkards (brawlers and revelers) of whom Isaiah had just spoken (vv. 11-12) would also die (v. 14). All proud people would be humiliated (cf. 2:11-12, 17) regardless of their previous stations in life (5:15). With the houses of the wealthy ruined (cf. vv. 8-9) and desolate, lambs would easily graze there (v. 17). This destruction of the nation would lead to a display of God's justice and holiness (v. 16). This does not mean that He delights in revenge. Rather, He keeps His word as spoken in the covenant. His discipline of the nation would show that He still loved her and would someday bring her back into a favored position.

- **Woe to the doubters of God (5:18-19)**

- 5:18-19. Perhaps Isaiah referred here to people who were genuinely questioning whether God was in control of the nation. Though attached to sin and wickedness by cords and ropes (i.e., deeply involved in sin) they wondered if God could save their nation. Apparently they wanted God to deliver them even though they did not want to give up their sinful practices. They wanted to see God act (let Him hasten His work) without any spiritual change on their part. However, deliverance, both personal and national, does not work that way. A spiritual change must be made before God will save His people from destruction.

- **Woe to those calling evil good (5:20)**
 - 5:20. Some people lead others astray by their perverted values. Evil—for example, adultery, idolatry, materialism, murder, and many other sins forbidden in the Scriptures—is often held up as being good. Those who say such things are under the threat (woe) of God’s judgment.
- **Woe to conceited ones (5:21)**
 - 5:21. Thinking themselves wise and clever, some people were not relying on God’s power to deliver the nation. They thought they could protect themselves.
- **Woe to the drunken bribe-takers (5:22-23)**
 - 5:22-23. Rather than being heroes and good government authorities, many leaders were known for their heavy drinking. They were ready to be bribed, not caring for the people they were ruling. They were more concerned for their own pleasure than for the rights of the innocent. Therefore they (those leaders) would be judged.
- Further results of Judah’s lifestyle (5:24-30) Isaiah had already mentioned a number of the judgments to come on the people because of their sins (vv. 13-17). Now he spoke again of the consequences of disobeying the covenant stipulations.
 - 5:24-25. These people Isaiah had been writing about would be burned like straw and dry grass and their flowers blown away like dust. This was because they had deliberately disobeyed God’s Word (on the LORD Almighty see comments on 1:9; on the Holy One of Israel see comments on 1:4). Because of the LORD’S anger many would die in the streets of Jerusalem. His raised hand (cf. 14:27) suggests His executing punishment; the mountains shaking from an earthquake speaks of His awesome presence (cf. Ex. 19:18; 1 Kings 19:11; Jer. 4:24; Hab. 3:10).
 - 5:26-30. When God’s judgment would come on Judah, the nations of Egypt and Assyria (7:18), and later Babylon would respond as if God had raised a banner as a signal for war. Those nations would seemingly come from the ends of the earth, a phrase Isaiah used frequently to suggest people everywhere (5:26; 24:16; 40:28; 41:5, 9; 42:10; 43:6; 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; 52:10; 62:11). The soldiers, responding speedily, would be vigorous (5:27) and well armed. Their chariots would be fast (v. 28). Ferocious like lions (v. 29) they would completely devastate Judah (v. 30). They would cover Judah like a sea and blot out the sun like the clouds, a picture of distress and gloom.

- Discussion Questions:

1. The first couple verses of Chapter 5 are a song that speaks of God’s desire to plant a vineyard. He says that the soil is fertile, the rocks have been cleared and only the best vines have been used. How do you explain “bad fruit” coming from such a well thought out planting?

2. The Lord also placed a watch tower on the property. What would be the value of having a watch tower in a vineyard and what exactly would you be watching for?
3. Imagine that Evangel is a vineyard that has been planted by the Lord. What have been some of the things that have cropped up in our midst over the years that have tried to cripple our harvest?
4. What would be a contemporary version of “woes” that God might use to bring correction to his people in today’s church?
5. It is not too difficult to apply these indictments against Israel to the contemporary church. Materialism, addiction, pride and blatant immorality are eating away at the American church. What steps would you take to revive and restore our nation if you were in charge?
6. Take a few moments to still your heart and mind and ask God if there was any unrepentant sin in your life that you could deal with right her and now. If you feel safe, share some of the things you repented of and ask the other members of the group to pray for you.