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# Observations from Isaiah

LESSON V : THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD (5:1-30)

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General chapter outline (from Young's *Isaiah*):

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## **3. God and Judah (5:1-30)**

### **a. The parable of the vineyard (5:1-7)**

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| <i>I will sing for the one I love<br/>a song about his vineyard:<br/>My loved one had a vineyard<br/>on a fertile hillside. He dug<br/>it up and cleared it of stones<br/>and planted it with the</i> | <i>Now will I sing to my<br/>wellbeloved a song of my<br/>beloved touching his vineyard.<br/>My wellbeloved hath a vineyard<br/>in a very fruitful hill: And he<br/>fenced it, and gathered out the</i> | <i>Let me sing, I pray you, for my<br/>beloved, A song of my beloved<br/>as to his vineyard: My beloved<br/>hath a vineyard in a fruitful<br/>hill, And he fenceth it, and<br/>casteth out its stones, And</i> |
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choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. (NIV)

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. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 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? 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: 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. 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. (KJV)

planteth it with a choice vine, And buildeth a tower in its midst, And also a wine press hath hewn out in it, And he waiteth for the yielding of grapes, And it yieldeth bad ones! And now, O inhabitant of Jerusalem, and man of Judah, Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What — to do still to my vineyard, That I have not done in it! Wherefore, I waited to the yielding of grapes, And it yieldeth bad ones! And now, pray, let me cause you to know, That which I am doing to my vineyard, To turn aside its hedge, And it hath been for consumption, To break down its wall, And it hath been for a treading-place. And I make it a waste, It is not pruned, nor arranged, And gone up have brier and thorn, And on the thick clouds I lay a charge, From raining upon it rain. Because the vineyard of Jehovah of Hosts Is the house of Israel, And the man of Judah His pleasant plant, And He waiteth for judgment, and lo, oppression, For righteousness, and lo, a cry. (YLT)

There is a unique feature in this chapter, something different from that which Isaiah's given us so far: *there is no word of hope intermingled in the word of condemnation.*

**THE DETERMINED SINGER** — Isaiah begins with determined language, emphatic; the sense is "I will sing indeed". The picture is of a folk singer and a ballad. This is not to assume this was ever actually put to music nor a popular, well-known song. "In all likelihood the prophet simply indulges in a rhythmical composition which he proclaims to his hearers. His words commence as a true song, but they soon pass over into a lamentation and an explanation. The chief characteristic of this song is lament and soon gives way to denunciation. In a certain sense we may say that as the vineyard disappointed the Lord, so the song disappoints us. It is not entertainment to which we are introduced, but teaching." [Young, *Isaiah*]

**MY BELOVED AND THE VINEYARD** — Isaiah speaks of his beloved who is later recognized to be the Lord. Isaiah's beloved owned a vineyard, speaking metaphorically of Israel. The vineyard motif is used elsewhere (27:2-6; Jer 12:7-10; cp Ps 80:8; Jer 2:21) which leads us to conclude it was a common analogy.

**ISRAEL HAD EVERY OPPORTUNITY** — Isaiah goes to great extremes to illustrate the care of the Lord for His people, giving them every opportunity to produce spiritual fruit. ***The fertile hillside*** — the land owned by the beloved was called the land *the son of oil or of fatness*, a Hebraic manner to say it was very fat or fruitful. It was a choice location, perfect to produce fruit. ***The preparation of the ground*** — the owner worked hard to clear the land of stones. Palestine is said to be unusually rocky, and the Arabs even have a proverb to the effect that God in creation had an angel with two bags of rocks under his arms when one of the bags broke over Palestine. For a farmer to clear the rocks from the land indicates much energy. Where the ground was hard, he broke it up so the vines could grow. ***Planted with the best of vines*** — No degenerate, second-rate plants were used in the initial planting but only the best, the elite of the vines. Isaiah might have been using for illustration the grapes in Palestine, known for both their size and quality. ***Protected by the owner of the vineyard*** — from the rocks of the fields the owner built a tower, a place from which he might oversee the field and protect it from harm. Compare this sturdy, permanent structure with the temporary booth built by the farmers in 1:8. ***The owner expected great fruit*** — to the great difficulty of the owner, a large vat was hewn out of solid rock to capture the juices from the grapes. Two vats were typically used and Isaiah may have been employing the word to designate the whole. One vat was where the ripened grapes would be placed and would be pressed or trampled, with the juice flowing into the lower vat. Again the stress is placed upon the permanence and expectant owner's hard efforts to provide for the crop. ***Time provided for a proper harvest*** — after such hard work the owner waited, looking for good grapes. The sense is that of expectancy and anticipation.

**CROP FAILURE** — to the owner's disappointment, the crop only yielded bad fruit. The fruit was rotten, unusable, both bad and offensive. The song ends in v2 and in v3,4 the speaker is that of the owner, presenting His case before the people. ***Make judgement as to the justice of the owner's decision*** — this is not a request but a command, the people themselves are told to judge the situation for themselves. It's as if the Lord asks them "*What more could I do?*" then hesitates to allow a response. ***This is not a failure or limitation on the part of the Lord*** — "It would also be a grave misunderstanding of the passage to assume that it suggests that God is limited in His ability, and that He had merely done the best He could under the circumstances. Isaiah constantly sets forth God as sovereign, a fact which appears even in this present parable where the rainfall is at God's disposal and command. The language of the question which Isaiah here asks is intended simply to manifest the abundant and overwhelming grace of God. He has been faithful to His promises, and those who heard Isaiah's words must acknowledge that fact." [Young, *Isaiah*]

**THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF JUDGEMENT** — The tone changes in v6,7 as the Lord tells Israel what He is to do with the "wild grapes". ***The protective hand of God is removed*** — surrounding the field is a hedge, either running parallel with the wall erected from the stones removed from the field or a hedge growing atop the stone wall. Once removed, cattle and other beasts were free to enter the vineyard and trample the vines. ***The loving care of God is removed*** — the Lord will neglect the vineyard and allow thistles, briars and thorns to grow. The ground will no more be worked, the weeds no longer pulled, the vines no longer cultivated. ***The active punishment of God will occur*** — in the former punishments the Lord was passive and sin itself

brought its own punishment; in the removal of rain He actively is commanding judicial punishment.

**THE PARABLE'S APPLICATION** — the parable was one which the children of Israel (Judah specifically) must heed. “It is not easy to bring out the powerful play on words in the Hebrew here, though some translators and many commentators have made the attempt. One of the best is from G.H. Box (*The Book of Isaiah*, in loc.) ‘For measures He looked — but lo massacres! For right — and lo riot!’ ” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] The reason for His “disappointment” was He looked for judgement and found none; He had given them the truth of the scriptures and looked for righteousness and found Israel wanting. This again speaks to our present Christian attitude towards sin: *the Lord does not give us His word so we might live in sin while glorying in the “grace of God”. Rather He gives us the word to show us His ways and expects obedience. While many believers are living in rebellion to His word while claiming Romans chapter 7, the Lord is expecting us to live in Romans chapter 8! As the familiar saying goes: He does love us even when we sin, but He loves us too much to leave us in our sin.*

### ***b. Analysis of Judah's sins (5:8-23)***

*Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land. The LORD Almighty has declared in my hearing: “Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants. A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a bath of wine, a homer of seed only an ephah of grain.” Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine. They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD, no respect for the work of his hands. Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding; their men of rank will die of hunger and their masses will be parched with thirst. Therefore the grave enlarges its appetite*

*Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah. Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! 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. 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. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure:*

*Wo to those joining house to house, Field to field they bring near, till there is no place, And ye have been settled by yourselves In the midst of the land! By the weapons of Jehovah of Hosts Do not many houses a desolation become? Great and good without inhabitant! For ten acres of vineyard do yield one bath, And an homer of seed yieldeth an ephah. Wo to those rising early in the morning, Strong drink they pursue! Tarrying in twilight, wine inflameth them! And harp, and psaltery, tabret, and pipe, And wine, have been their banquets, And the work of Jehovah they behold not, Yea, the work of His hands they have not seen. Therefore my people removed without knowledge, And its honourable ones are famished, And its multitude dried up of thirst. Therefore hath Sheol enlarged herself, And hath opened her mouth without limit. And gone down hath its honour, and its*

and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers. So man will be brought low and mankind humbled, the eyes of the arrogant humbled. But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness. Then sheep will graze as in their own pasture; lambs will feed among the ruins of the rich. Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit, and wickedness as with cart ropes, to those who say, "Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it." 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. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight. Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks, who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent. (NIV)

and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat. Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: 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! 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! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! (KJV)

multitude, And its noise, and its exulting one — into her. And bowed down is the low, and humbled the high, And the eyes of the haughty become low, And Jehovah of Hosts is high in judgment, And the Holy God sanctified in righteousness, And fed have lambs according to their leading, And waste places of the fat ones Do sojourners consume. Wo to those drawing out iniquity with cords of vanity, And as with thick ropes of the cart — sin. Who are saying, 'Let Him hurry, Let Him hasten His work, that we may see, And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel Draw near and come, and we know.' Wo to those saying to evil 'good,' And to good 'evil,' Putting darkness for light, and light for darkness, Putting bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Wo to the wise in their own eyes, And — before their own faces — intelligent! Wo to the mighty to drink wine, And men of strength to mingle strong drink. Declaring righteous the wicked for a bribe, And the righteousness of the righteous They turn aside from him. (YLT)

In direct application of the former parable, the Lord lists six reasons for judgement, each beginning with "woe" (the descriptions being that of Young's):

**A COVETOUS PEOPLE (v8-10)** — the first woe is pronounced against *wealthy landowners who unjustly buys up all the property until their houses touch one another*. This was especially important to the Hebrews for God forbade them to buy and sell property in the manner of which we are accustomed. "The horror of the prophets in response to the sin of covetousness in its application to land (cf. 1 Kings 21:17-24) was almost certainly due to their recognition of the Deuteronomic principle expressed also in the Book of Joshua — *that the land really belonged to*

**God and that he had made the various tribes and families stewards of it in perpetuity.** O. Kaiser (in loc.) appropriately quotes Lev 25:23b as summing up the OT teaching about land. ***‘The land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.’***” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] If one was to become so deep in debt that the land had to be sold, it was a temporary transaction where once the man was financially stable he could buy back the land sold, or if that was not possible, the land would be returned at the year of Jubilee (Lev 25; Deut 15). Note this condemnation is not against merely buying property; ***the implication is rich covetous men are taking advantage of the poor and monopolizing the land.*** Having described the sin, the Lord pronounces judgement. The great mansions built for comfort was to become a ghost town, empty, unused. One reason for the houses to be without inhabitants was the land would become unproductive and not yield enough to support a large population. The “bath” is given variously as 36.44, about 40 or about 20 liters so the exact amount of wine produced from the field is uncertain. The details are unimportant for the thrust of the message is clear: a large field will only produce less than 8 gallons of grape juice. The same was true of the grain. A homer was approximately 10½ bushels, and ten ephahs was equal to a homer; therefore instead of receiving more from the seeds, the fields produced less, the farmer would plant 10 bushels of seeds and receive only 1 bushel of grain.

**A DEBAUCHING PEOPLE (v11-17)** — (*debauchery = excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures, intemperance*) the second woe speaks against those who engage in drunkenness and dissipation, beginning early in the morning their pursuit of alcohol. Rather than spending the day for the glory of God, it is spent in debauchery. “There are a number of prophetic passages in which drunkenness is condemned (v. 22; 22:13; 28:18; Hos 7:5; Joel 3:3; Amos 6:6). Most societies consider early morning drinking a mark of moral degeneracy; for the man who thinks first of drink when he awakes is in its grip, and he cannot pull his weight in the work of the day (cf. Eccl 10:16; Acts 2:13-15).” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] Verse 12 speaks of their “partying” in which there were wind, string and percussion instruments. It is not that Isaiah is condemning music but rather these are given to illustrate their drunken carousals. Isaiah later predicts such partying will come to an end: *“The gaiety of the tambourines is stilled, the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent. No longer do they drink wine with a song; the beer is bitter to its drinkers.”* (Isaiah 24:8,9). **God’s work ignored** — Young takes this to mean God’s work is the coming judgement; therefore they party late into the night, disregarding that their sins were speeding them to destruction. **God’s handiwork is ignored** — in accordance with Ps 19:1 God’s glory is evident throughout creation yet drunken eyes do not see His glory. Since the debauchery of the people was so great, God was preparing captivity. Isaiah describes the event as already have taken place, that Israel had been already removed by a hostile nation. ***They will go into captivity due to ignorance*** — Why will they go into captivity? “for want of knowledge” (i.e. without knowledge). Not that it was ignorance that brought captivity but sin. In a sense one might argue that Israel did not know, and in a sense they would be correct: through sin Israel did not recognize and know the working of God and so, not knowing the judgement, they ignored His warnings and went into captivity. ***But it is only in a certain sense that this was true, for their ignorance was a willful ignorance. It is not that they did not know, it is that they chose to rebel from what they knew and that rebellion brought blindness and ignorance.*** “(T)he great emphasis of the context is that the continued, steady sinning of the nation was what brought on the banishment. The nation has become so steeped in sin it does not know that the catastrophe which is to come upon it is the result of its own doings, and that in this catastrophe the judging and punishing hand of God is to be seen. In other words, the nation cannot rightly interpret the signs of the times. Of the true nature and meaning of what will befall it, Judah will be ignorant.” [Young, *Isaiah*] ***Their glory is famished men*** — i.e.

the glory of the nation will be found in the famished men who compose it. That which should bring honor to the country is perishing from hunger. ***Dried up with thirst*** — there were multitudes caught up in “partying”, the Lord would bring them to the place of being parched with thirst. “By means of pagan manner of living the nation has profaned the holy and promised land. Consequently, the people will continue to live in a heathen manner in a foreign land. Eating and drinking had been made to serve their evil purposes; they would therefore face hunger and thirst. Living sensually like animals and without the use of understanding, they were now to go into their punishment without an actual understanding of the true nature of what was taking place.” [Young, *Isaiah*] ***The Holocaust*** — coming from such dire circumstances is wide-spread death, with Sheol being pictured with wide-open jaws, ready to receive those who die. Her mouth is open wide “without measure”, representing the enormity of the death toll. ***One of the intents of punishment*** — God’s acts are multiplicative and typically only one reason for an event cannot be given; however, the intent emphasized by Isaiah in this verse is ***to humble the pride of man and uplift the glory of God in His righteousness***. There is a play on words here: in v15 man is “lofty” but the Lord brings them low and the Lord becomes lofty. ***Judgement is complete*** — where proud men sinfully dwelt is now inhabited by sheep grazing peacefully. The vineyard is gone, the rich are gone, and the land lies at peace.

**AN UNBELIEVING PEOPLE (v18,19)** — Isaiah paints an unusual picture here: a heavy cart being drawn not by animals but by men; yoked, straining, tugging men. Thus is pictured ***the willing slavery men enter into when they indulge in sin*** — “*I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*” (John 8:34). ***The mockery of God*** — Blinded by sin (as mentioned in v12 above) they mock the coming judgement of God. It reminds me of a man my brother and I were witnessing to years ago outside a bar. As we gave him the gospel, he mocked and cried out “*If there’s a God in heaven, let Him strike me with lightning!*” My brother and I stepped back in awe, but the Lord was merciful and the man went his way, more hardened in his sin. “The depth of depravity is reached when the taunting unbelievers mention the Holy One of Israel.... Their use of this designation is clear evidence that they had often heard it from the lips of Isaiah. Of course they use it derisively. ***Thus to employ the name which had made such a deep impression upon the prophet was a mark of heinous wickedness.***” [Young, *Isaiah*]

**A TRUTH-PERVERTING PEOPLE (v20)** — Had Israel accepted the lie that there are no moral absolutes? There is no standard? Had humanism swept through the land until the “religious right” were the objects of scorn? America has reached the place of judgement the Lord pronounced against Israel millenniums ago: the gays and moral perverts are “good” and it is the Christians who are “evil”. “*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil*” — God is not asleep and He will one day show Himself as holy and right.

**A PEOPLE WISE IN ITS OWN EYES (v21)** — immediately Isaiah pronounces another woe, as if the reason people pervert the truth and accept the lie is because they have rejected the wisdom of God.

**A JUSTICE-PERVERTING PEOPLE (v22,23)** — as the word of God is rejected, the heroes are no longer those who are moral but those who are strong, perverted, the “winners” to quote today’s descriptive praise. These are the “real men”, the heroes which Hollywood promotes. Gone are the Roy Rogers’s and the Lone Rangers, moral men who strive to do right and teach godliness. Today’s “heroes” are the strong who have quite obvious flaws. Their message is “might is right” and “there is no right nor wrong”.

### ***c. The judgement of abandonment (5:24-30)***

*Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the LORD's anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised. He lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles for those at the ends of the earth. Here they come, swiftly and speedily! Not one of them grows tired or stumbles, not one slumbers or sleeps; not a belt is loosened at the waist, not a sandal thong is broken. Their arrows are sharp, all their bows are strung; their horses' hoofs seem like flint, their chariot wheels like a whirlwind. Their roar is like that of the lion, they roar like young lions; they growl as they seize their prey and carry it off with no one to rescue. In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks at the land, he will see darkness and distress; even the light will be darkened by the clouds. (NIV)*

*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. 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. 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: 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: Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: 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. 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. (KJV)*

*Therefore, as a tongue of fire devoureth stubble, And flaming hay falleth, Their root is as muck, And their flower as dust goeth up. Because they have rejected the law of Jehovah of Hosts, And the saying of the Holy One of Israel despised. Therefore hath the anger of Jehovah burned among His people, And He stretcheth out His hand against it, And smiteth it, and the mountains tremble, And their carcass is as filth in the midst of the out-places. With all this His anger did not turn back, And still His hand is stretched out! And He lifted up an ensign to nations afar off, And hissed to it from the end of the earth, And lo, with haste, swift it cometh. There is none weary, nor stumbling in it, It doth not slumber, nor sleep, Nor opened hath been the girdle of its loins, Nor drawn away the latchet of its sandals. Whose arrows are sharp, and all its bows bent, Hoofs of its horses as flint have been reckoned, And its wheels as a hurricane! Its roaring is like a lioness, It roareth like young lions, And it howleth, and seizeth prey, And carrieth away safely, and there is none delivering. And it howleth against it in that day as the howling of a sea, And it hath looked attentively to the land, And lo, darkness — distress, And light hath been darkened by its abundance! (YLT)*

**SWIFT AND SURE JUDGEMENT** — “The series of ‘woes’ is over. The last of them was pronounced against evil judges; now the supreme Judge begins to declare sentence. The fire of God will burn them; the hand of God will smite them. In 40:6-8 the prophet likens human life to grass and flowers, doomed to wither and die. Here he uses them as figures of judgment because they are so vulnerable to fire. To those familiar with grassland fires, *the illustration suggests comprehensiveness and swiftness as well as the inexorable character of the judgment.* The cause spelled out in detail in the preceding woes is summarily expressed as rejection of God’s word.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

**“SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD”** — as fire which has been kindled, it will continue until all is consumed. His mercy has been extended and rejected, therefore what remains is judgement. This is a teaching not often heard today, but the grace of God has its limits! *“But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you — when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.”* (Prov 1:24-31). Verses which have always haunted my thoughts are in Hebrews: *“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?”* (Heb 10:26-29). The key words I want to emphasize is *“without mercy”*. Isaiah speaks of the mountains moving and the streets filled with dead bodies yet He is not moved with compassion. ***He is a holy righteous God — let’s not abuse His grace!***

**THE COMING EXILE** — being in control of all the nations, the Lord summons the enemy to judge His people. Verse 26 is a strong verse on the sovereignty of God. In verse 27 Isaiah begins to describe the foes of Israel. ***Strong foes*** — a weary army is easily defeated. None of these which come against Judah are exhausted, none must fall behind. ***Eager foes*** — so great is their desire and eagerness for battle that they disregarding sleep. ***Prepared foes*** — the girdle which held together the cloak and provided a hold for the sword and dagger was not loosened nor opened but in good working condition, as was the sandals. The arrows were sharpened and the bows ready for war. The horses in antiquity were not shod, therefore a horse with hard hoofs could endure heavy and difficult travel. Isaiah speaks of Judah’s foes as having formidable horses and chariots. ***Fierce foes*** — as lions strike and then carry their prey to a safe place where they may devour it undisturbed, so is the coming army against Israel. They are fierce and bold, and they will have success. ***Innumerable foes*** — Isaiah had compared them to a devouring lion; here he speaks of them as if a roaring tidal wave coming towards Judah. There is no escape.

“So man will be brought low and mankind humbled,  
the eyes of the arrogant humbled.

But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by His justice,  
and the holy God will show Himself holy by His righteousness.”

— Isaiah 5:15,16 NIV