



We remember that Isaiah chapters 1–5 fall into three sections (chapter 1; 2:1–4:6 and 5:1–30). Chapter 1 gives a general description of Israel’s spiritual crisis. The section from 2:1 to 4:6 explains the way in which sin ruins God’s intended destiny for his people, and yet gives hope that God will still snatch victory from defeat. Now the last unit of this section¹ points to how ungrateful and unnecessary was Israel’s sin. God did everything that was necessary for his people’s fruitfulness. If they are still unfruitful the fault is entirely theirs.

5:1-30

• Israel’s sin is ungrateful and unnecessary

1. God provides adequately for his people’s fruitfulness

1. God provides adequately for his people’s fruitfulness. Isaiah sings a song which pictures God as his much-loved friend who has planted a vineyard.

*1 I will sing a song concerning my loved one,
my beloved’s song concerning his vineyard:
My loved one had a vineyard
on a very fertile hillside.*

• God is likened to the planter of a vineyard

*2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.
He built a watchtower in it
and cut out a wine vat as well.*

• Thorough preparations

The preparations were thorough. The planter of the vineyard did everything that was necessary for the vineyard to produce fruit. The site chosen was one where the land was fertile. The stones were thoroughly cleared away. The quality of the seed sown was good. It had a watchtower so that someone could watch over the plot of ground. A wine vat was prepared in the hope of grapes that could be made into valuable wine. The owner expected fruit but was disappointed.

• The owner expected fruit but was disappointed

*Then he waited confidently for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.*

*3 Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.
4 What more ought to have been done for my vineyard
than I have done for it?
When I looked for good grapes,
why did it yield only bad?’*

2. God is vexed and angered by fruitlessness

2. God is vexed and angered by fruitlessness. In Isaiah’s song, the vineyard will be abandoned.

• The vineyard will be abandoned

*5 Now I will tell you
what I am going to do to my vineyard:
I will take away its hedge,
and it will be available for destruction;
I will break down its wall,
and it will be available for someone to trample on.
6 I will make it a wasteland,
neither pruned nor cultivated,
and briars and thorns will grow there.
I will command the clouds
not to rain on it.’*

• The parable applies to Israel

Isaiah applies the parable to Israel.

*⁷The vineyard of Yahweh Almighty
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are the garden of his delight.
And he confidently expected justice, but saw bloodshed;
he expected righteousness, but heard a cry of distress.*

• Everything God did was powerful and effective, so why did Israel fall into such sin?

When God acts to save his people, he does a thorough job. There is nothing wrong with what he does. The passover-blood that redeemed Israel was powerful enough to deliver them. The watchful care of God was always there for them to call upon. The law given through Moses was sufficient to guide them for that stage of the people's life. Everything God did was powerful and effective, so why did Israel fall into such sin? The fault was entirely on the side of the people. It is the same with the Christian. All things that relate to life and godliness are given to us by God. He is there to answer our prayers. His grace is strong to hold us up in trouble. The blood of Christ is powerful to rescue us from sin and Satan. What reason can we ever give for not being fruitful for God?

• Same for Christians

• Isaiah describes the unfruitfulness of Israel – rich enlarging their houses

Isaiah describes the unfruitfulness of Israel. The rich were enlarging their houses and pushing the poorer people of Israel away from owning any land at all.

*⁸Woe to you who add house to house
and enlarge your field
until no space is left
and you live alone on an estate.
⁹It rings in my ears! Yahweh Almighty hears it.*

• Soon God would act in judgement – empty houses and unproductive vineyards

Soon God would act in judgement.

*'Surely the great houses will become desolate,
the fine mansions left without occupants.
¹⁰A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a six-gallon
measure of wine,
a homer of seed only an ephah of grain.'*

• Wild living

There was wild living but without thoughtfulness for God.

• No thoughtfulness for God

*¹¹Woe to those who rise early in the morning
to run after their drinks,
who stay up late at night
with the purpose of becoming in flames with wine.
¹²They have harps and lyres at their banquets,
tambourines and flutes — and wine!
But they have no regard for the deeds of
Yahweh, no respect for the work of his hands.*

• Exile – northerners to Assyria and southerners to Babylon

The result was that God's people would soon go into exile, the northerners to Assyria, the southerners to Babylon.

*¹³Therefore my people will go into exile
for lack of knowledge.*

They will face the agonies of starvation.

• Starvation

*Their men whom they honour will be hungry men,
and their people will be parched with thirst.*

• **Death**

Many will die.

¹⁴Therefore Sheol enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and its crowds and its noise and each one in it who exults.

• **Humans humiliated but God exalted**

Humans will be humiliated, but God exalted.

*¹⁵As a result man will be brought low and mankind will be humbled; the eyes of the arrogant humbled.
¹⁶But Yahweh Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.*

• **Land empty**

The land will become empty for sheep to roam as they wish.

• **God wants us to be fruitful**

¹⁷Then sheep will graze as in their own pasture; tramps will feed among the ruins of the rich.

• **He wants compassion, thoughtfulness, sober living and contentment**

The whole section shows how intensely God wants fruitfulness and effectiveness from what he does. God goes to much trouble to prepare salvation for us. His preparations are thorough, so as the owner of the vineyard he expects fruit from us. If we are fruitless towards him after all that he has done, we shall fall beneath his chastenings which can be fearful indeed. Isaiah's denunciations show us what God looks for: compassion, thoughtfulness towards God, sober living, contentment.