

# Pentwater Bible Church

*Isaiah Message 11*  
*February 10, 2019*



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The Book of Isaiah

Message Eleven

THE SONG OF HIS VINEYARD

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Isaiah 5:1–7

*<sup>1</sup> Let me sing for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: <sup>2</sup>and he digged 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 hewed out a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

*<sup>3</sup>And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. <sup>4</sup>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? <sup>5</sup>And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: <sup>6</sup>and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. <sup>7</sup>For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry (ASV, 1901).*

THE SONG OF HIS VINEYARD

This song begins with the Prophet Isaiah, about to represent the state and condition of the people of Israel by way of parable imbedded within a song. Up to now he has not been able to reach them by reasoning to them with repeated warnings (Isaiah 1:18). This song is one of the most beautiful and sublime as well as effective poetic expressions of communication in the Bible.

In another but, similar situation consider how the prophet Nathan chose this form of expression when conveying king David's major adulterous sin with Bathsheba to him (II Samuel 12:1–13). It teaches the lesson by way of illustration without a direct engagement or confrontation to the hearer. They will listen and realize who this subject is by the time it ends. Jesus used the parables in the manner. It is also quite similar to the concept of *sotto voca* in drama and music. There, the volume is lowered in an attempt to force people to listen more intently to a message. In this way God can get the entire lesson into the people before they reject it and stop listening. In keeping with the desire to have the message received in the most receptive attitude Isaiah seems to sing this song on the occasion of the autumn Feast of Tabernacles, a time of joy and celebration (Leviticus 23:34; Deuteronomy 16:13–15). He begins first, however, by informing his hearers whose fertile vineyard it is they are standing on, that it belongs to a great friend of his and he is singing this song about it on this friend's behalf. The underlying message is God's undying love for His chosen people the nation Israel.

In the first section (vv. 1–2) of this song which Isaiah sings is about God’s care for His vineyard and the condition of the vineyard. The second section (vv. 3–6) he details what God said in view of her condition. In the third and final section (v. 7) the vineyard in the figure is identified.

The first time Israel is referred to as a vine is in Genesis 49:11 when Jacob prophesied his son Judah’s destiny. God has referred to Israel as a vineyard in other places (Isaiah 3:14; Psalm 80:8–18; Jeremiah 2:21; 12:10; Ezekiel 15:6–8; Hosea 10:1).

#### THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD

Isaiah 5:1

*<sup>1</sup> Let me sing for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill (ASV, 1901).*

The first verse uses a special Hebrew word *yadeed*, which is a term of endearment. It properly designates one greatly beloved. It is applied to saints as being the beloved, or the favorites of God (Psalm 127:2; Deuteronomy 33:12). This verse, explains that *my wellbeloved* is Jehovah, the God of the nation Israel. Isaiah is making a statement that Jehovah God is well loved by him. As the prophet of Israel, he loved God and here he expresses this. The Hebrew text now makes a slight change from *yadeed* (wellbeloved, God) to *yadod* (beloved, Israel). Isaiah is making a statement that he will sing for God a song of how his people, the nation Israel have cared for God’s vineyard.

Isaiah now goes on to say that his *wellbeloved* had a vineyard. This vineyard was located in a very fertile hill. This is referring to Eretz Israel (the land Israel). Because the Hebrew word *keren* (horn) is used here which is the highest point on horned animals it references the land Israel as the most (highest) in terms of fertility of all lands. This is apparent from the fertility seen today in the Jezreel valley which is considered the breadbasket of the Mid-East.

#### GOD PROVIDED PROTECTION FOR ISRAEL

Isaiah 5:2

*<sup>2</sup>and he digged 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 hewed out a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes (ASV, 1901).*

The prophet describes how much the Lord did to plant and cultivate a vineyard that would produce grapes of a superb quality. The vineyard’s owner then built a fence (*digged*) around it for protection from the wild animals, invaders, and thieves. He then gathered the stones from the ground in the vineyard so as to leave only good earth into which He planted the *choicest vine* which would produce fine seedless grapes (*choicest vine*). God planted the elite of the vines. A vale in Israel which was noted for its excellent grapes became known as the vale of Soreq and was home to Delilah (Judges 16:4). It produced the best and most choice grapes. The grapes of Israel are remarkable, both for their size and quality.

Once the planting was underway a tower was built right in the middle of it to provide a higher elevated watch post for a sentry to guard the vineyard. With God being the sentry, the tower gave him a place to live as he protected the vineyard from predators during the harvest season. This tower is a reference to the Tabernacle and later the Temple where He would meet with the Children of Israel as He provided protection for them. He gave them sanitary, dietary, health practices and a relationship with Him to protect them. Then a pit was dug to set a *winepress* which would process the grapes when they were ripe and ready to be turned into wine. The *yegev*, “wine vat,” was the lower part of the trough, often carved out of the solid stone, and served to receive the juice of the grapes which had been pressed down or trampled on in the upper trough or wine press. From the press the juice flowed down into the *yegev*. The most difficult part of this was to make this *yegev* or wine vat, the owner (*wellbeloved*) of the vineyard provided. The duty of hewing such a vat from the stones was a very difficult task. This was all done so that everything which was necessary for the vineyard to bring forth good grapes might be achieved.

However, the owner had hoped this well-built vineyard planted with the choicest of vines would bring forth the best product only produced rotten grapes. Hebrew words are built on a root of three letters. From this they morph into other similar words that act as a play on words. The Hebrew word here for rotten is from a root word *baash*. It means offensive or corrupt like the poisonous herb *monk's head*. which is very offensive in smell and produces berries that look like grapes.

Here is an example of the history of Israel. Israel was chosen and blessed of God through His incredible grace, but despite God's blessings she was worthless and fit only to be cast out, as rotten grapes. This indeed did happen to them when they were essentially vomited from the land after they engaged in adulterous, idolatrous acts against the owner and developer of the vineyard. God also did this to the Canaanites before them and He warned them that this too would happen to them if they turned against Him.

Leviticus 18:24–30

*24Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out from before you; 25and the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomiteth out her inhabitants. 26Ye therefore shall keep my statutes and mine ordinances, and shall not do any of these abominations; neither the home-born, nor the stranger that sojourneth among you; 27(for all these abominations have the men of the land done, that were before you, and the land is defiled); 28that the land vomit not you out also, when ye defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. 29For whosoever shall do any of these abominations, even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people. 30Therefore shall ye keep my charge, that ye practise not any of these abominable customs, which were practised before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am Jehovah your God (ASV, 1901)*

By the song of the vineyard we can see the protection provided for by God. He surrounded the Israelites or inclosed them in protection by angels and Himself. By gathering out the stones we

can see the removal of idols; by the tower, the tabernacle and temple erected in the midst of Judea; by the wine-press, the altar He removed the barriers to a direct unimpeded relationship with Him..

#### WHAT MORE COULD GOD HAVE DONE?

Isaiah 5:3–4

*<sup>3</sup>And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. <sup>4</sup>What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it (ASV, 1901)?*

Having described the particularly advantageous situation of, the soil, its location, as well as the protection of the vineyard, and its failure to produce good fruit, he submits the case to the decision of his audience. The owner of the vineyard interrupts the song with questions that request the listeners in Jerusalem to decide who was at fault. These “rulers/inhabitants of Jerusalem,” whose sins always determined the future of the nation, were now asked to declare their own judgment.

In this way this song has progressed similarly to king David listening to the prophet Nathan until he was finished. Here, the audience here will end up condemning themselves, for they were the ones ruining the fruit of the nation. The Lord asks the audience two questions: (1) If the owner of the vineyard was responsible and worked hard, did he not have every reason to expect good grapes instead of the sour rotten ones? (2) The Lord through Isaiah speaking in the first person “I” says, “*What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*” What has the owner not done, that should have been done? Who was responsible? The response of the listeners is not expected as this is a rhetorical question. Because of the nature of the type of question it is obvious that these rulers of Jerusalem would have agreed that the vineyard owner was not at fault for He worked very hard in the vineyard.

#### THE COURSE OF ACTION AN ATTACK

Isaiah 5:5–6

*<sup>5</sup>And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: <sup>6</sup>and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it (ASV, 1901).*

The owner of the vineyard proposes to implement a plan of action. He first presents his plan of action to his audience. Perhaps this is to gain their approval and by their reaction they will know whether they will repent of their ways and produce fine grapes or not. The Lord is long suffering always wanting the sinner to see the folly of his or her sin and repent. The owner decides not just to abandon the vineyard for a better plot of land, he attacks it. by removing what protected it from the various predators who would come into it. Now no thorn hedges or stone walls will remain. Since there will no longer be any cultivating or caring for the plants (*not be pruned nor hoed*), and by cursing the field to prevent rain from falling on it (Leviticus 26:19; Deuteronomy 28:23–24;

Amos 4:7–8) the vineyard will fall into ruin. Although this might appear to be a severe over reaction by the disappointed lover, it was totally appropriate, since there was no hope of ever getting anything of any value to grow in this vineyard in its current state. Through neglect of the vineyard there will abruptly come complete ruin. It has already been cultivated as much as it is going to be. No longer will the vines be pruned, nor will anything else that is necessary for their proper growth be done for them. As in the case of God always providing promised blessing with judgment for sin the previous chapter presented a picture of abundance and blessing; here, however, a sharp contrast is found with brier bushes, thorns abandonment and dry earth. God's capabilities are far stronger than anything man can do. His many weapons with which He has for punishing our ingratitude when He sees that we despise his kindness include depriving us of needed rain bringing in enemy nations and shaking the earth in quakes.

#### REVEALING THE BAD GRAPES

Isaiah 5:7

*<sup>7</sup>For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry (ASV, 1901).*

The prophet's application and God's judgment was very clear. God's grace would end and his curse would fall on these oppressive leaders and citizens of Israel because their lives did not demonstrate the basic moral behavior required by the Creator and Protector. These are some of the same criteria God has used in all times to evaluate the behavior of people in positions of leadership and those who follow them. This is especially true of religious people in positions of authority. Jesus fostered this concept when he said, "*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*" (Matthew 7:16), and "*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*" (Matthew 7:19). The evidence is pretty clear: Jesus is just as hard on the oppressive leaders who treat people unjustly as the Lord spoke through Isaiah was.

This song reminded the listener that God was the lover who had poured out his love for his special vineyard. We are all in His vineyard and are specially created, planted, and continually cared for by God's grace. Once God chooses and an individual or a people who accept this calling to salvation, He tenderly cares for and protects his own. As this happens he patiently waits for his people to produce good fruit in their lives. In his sovereign oversight of his people God observes what happens in society and he knows what kind of fruit his chosen vines produce. He views all fruit as either rotten or good according to His standards provided in the Scriptures. God's protection and care may be withdrawn from those who are unrighteous or who fail to produce godly fruit (John 15:1–7). God is especially severe on privileged people who mistreat others through injustice.

Next message: WOES UPON SINFUL ISRAEL

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