

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 5:8-30, CONDEMNATION AND JUDGMENT

In the parable of the vineyard, Yahweh identified Israel as His vineyard, but it was a vineyard that had neglected to produce the fruit it was created to produce and should have produced given the Person and the work behind the establishment of the nation. Israel was supernaturally created by the Creator God to be a kingdom of His priests to the world, but they failed to carry out their assignment. Instead, they joined the world from which they had been set apart and became indistinguishable from those who were immersed in Satan's fallen world system. In the pericope before us today, Yahweh, through the prophet Isaiah, condemned their rebellion by revealing various aspects of their sinful conduct and described the judgment they brought upon themselves.

One of the issues Israel had was pride in their wealth. The problem was they forgot who made it possible for them to acquire that wealth in the first place. The wealthy were oppressing the poor rather than caring for them, and they were acquiring more wealth at the expense of the poor simply for the purpose of acquiring more wealth. This rebellious, sinful attitude was rebuked.

Isaiah 5:8-10 <sup>8</sup>Woe to those who add house to house *and* join field to field, Until there is no more room, So that you have to live alone in the midst of the land! <sup>9</sup>In my ears the LORD of hosts *has sworn*, "Surely, many houses shall become desolate [שָׁמָה], Even great and fine ones, without occupants. <sup>10</sup>"For ten acres of vineyard will yield *only* one bath of wine, And a homer of seed will yield *but* an ephah of grain."

Woe, הוי, is primarily used as a lament and it may be used as a proclamation of impending judgment which is the context in this pericope. It seems that when God says, "Woe to you" over some issue, repeated six times in these verses, that should get your attention, but the Israelites didn't listen. The woes were followed by disciplinary consequences imposed for their rebellion. It always takes an extraordinary intervention into the life of that nation to get their attention and, as this pericope, as well as many others in Isaiah, will make clear, extraordinary intervention was going to occur. History proves that it will have to occur over and over again before they finally get the message, but that is far into the future from the time of Isaiah.

The Lord condemned the acquisition of property by the rich to the point that they owned so much land there was no room for anyone else in the vicinity of their land holdings. They owned so much land that they were seemingly living a life in isolation possibly only with other wealthy land owners in the area. There is no mention here concerning how the land was acquired, but based on Isaiah 3:14-15 we know those in the highest social class were abusing people by plundering them and grinding the face of the poor. The Mosaic Law may have played a role in this situation as well because it is implied here that the land was owned in perpetuity which violated the Mosaic Law. The land was to remain in the families and either be redeemed by a kinsman redeemer, or be returned to the family at Jubilee (Lv. 25:23-28).

The prophet proclaimed, on the authority of the Word of God, that these land owners were going to lose their land and their houses would become desolate. This is more than simply abandoning those homes in hard times. Desolate, *שָׁמָה*, means desolation, devastation, ruin, horror, and astonishment. The emphasis is on the reaction to the devastation which is horror, fright, and astonishment at the degree of ruin visited upon the homes of these wealthy land owners. The context here is in relation to the judgment that will be imposed on these people by God which lays waste to their property and renders their situation all the more horrible and frightening to all who see it. The fact that these houses will be without occupant is an inference that the people living in them will be removed from not only the houses, but from the land.

The land will be seriously impaired in terms of its productivity. Ten acres of vineyard would yield only about 6 gallons of juice and a homer, which is about 6 bushels of seed, would yield about 3/5 of a bushel of grain. These are non-existent returns on the investment into the vineyards and grain fields.

The drunken hedonism of the people was next on the list of practices the Lord condemned. Other Scriptures indicate this was a perpetual problem in the sinful land.

Isaiah 5:11–12 <sup>11</sup>Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them! <sup>12</sup>Their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, Nor do they consider the work of His hands.

Habakkuk 2:15–16 <sup>15</sup>Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, Who mix in your venom even to make *them* drunk So as to look on their nakedness! <sup>16</sup>You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to you, And utter disgrace *will come* upon your glory.

Isaiah 28:7–8 <sup>7</sup>And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; They reel while having visions, They totter *when rendering* judgment. <sup>8</sup>For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a *single clean* place.

This does not paint a flattering picture of Israelite society. This may be a condemnation only of the high society portion of Israel's citizenry, but we cannot disregard the fact that Isaiah earlier condemned the "sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity" (Is. 1:4) indicating that Israel's problems existed, at least to some extent, throughout society. For some reason, the wealthier a society is and the more pride they take in that wealth, the more decadent that society becomes. It was not simply the drinking that was being condemned; it was the behavior of the people in connection with the drinking and the totality of all that situation represented. Hedonism became the focus of their lives rather than fulfilling the purposes for which they were created.

The picture presented here is not just one of people drinking and partying too much; it is a picture of constant debauchery. The religious leadership was so out of control that

the concept of spiritual leadership had departed. Life in Israel had become one big, drunken party. That sets up the real problem: the Israelites had forgotten their God and replaced him with the hedonistic, self-centered pursuits of Satan's world system. The focus of the Israelites turned inward to self and away from Yahweh. God's plan and purpose for Israel had not only been forgotten but rejected and replaced by Satan's plan and purpose for Israel which was the total destruction of the nation and its people. They were blind to that truth—and to a great extent, they are still blind to that truth to this day.

The prophet then warned the nation of impending judgment—a warning that fell on deaf ears.

Isaiah 5:13–17 <sup>13</sup>Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, And their multitude is parched with thirst. <sup>14</sup>Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure; And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry and the jubilant within her, descend into it. <sup>15</sup>So the common man will be humbled and the man of importance abased, The eyes of the proud also will be abased. <sup>16</sup>But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness. <sup>17</sup>Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture, And strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy.

Israel's exile at the hands of Assyria was about to take place and Judah's exile into Babylon was not that far into the future from the time of this prophecy. Neither kingdom listened to the warnings Yahweh provided them through not only Isaiah but through a number of different prophets.

The destruction of the kingdoms and the exile of the people is attributed to one thing—they had no knowledge. This was not due to the fact the knowledge was unavailable, because it was available, but they deliberately rejected it. They had the Word of God and they had men of God, prophets, who were proclaiming it to them. They had no knowledge because they did not want to have God's knowledge. Some theologians claim that the Israelites only lost the knowledge of God Himself, but still knew the Word of God, the Mosaic Law. That is untrue. Before the Babylonian exile, they did actually lose their knowledge of the Word of God and the Temple even fell into disrepair. During Josiah's reign, the Temple was being repaired for use and the Law was found in the Temple (2 Chron. 34). It was a revelation to the king who had not heard it before and he was particularly alarmed upon hearing the curses for disobedience and rebellion.

2 Chronicles 34:19, 21, 30 <sup>19</sup>When the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes.... <sup>21</sup>“Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book.”... <sup>30</sup>The king went up to the house of the LORD and all the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the Levites and all the people, from the greatest to the least; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

The Isaiah text may be alluding to the fact their destruction would catch the Israelites unawares, i.e., they were unaware of their impending doom, but, if that is true, it was only because they forgot and rejected the curses promised them for their rebellion and disobedience. If they had not disbelieved and rejected God's covenant promises, they, especially the priests, would not have been surprised when He imposed divine discipline.

In terms of application, the church is in the same situation today. We have the Word of God available to us, but most professing Christians have no idea what it really means according to literal hermeneutics. Christianity is now characterized by biblical ignorance. The consequences today are spiritual dullness and ineffectiveness, but those are very devastating consequences that will have eternal ramifications in terms of the gospel and rewards. If the gospel is not according to the Word of God, it is a false gospel. Rewards cannot be earned unless based on sound biblical principles. The Word of God was a matter of life and death for the Israelites and it is a matter of supreme spiritual, eternal significance for believers today.

Israel had enjoyed her wealth eating and drinking, but once God's judgment fell, they were going to face hunger and thirst. This exile is going to affect the entire nation—the wealthy, the leadership, and the citizens of Judah in general. The only people the Babylonians left in Judah were “some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen” (Jer. 52:16). Numerous people will lose their lives and go down to Sheol during the judgment that is going to be imposed on the nation. The use of the word Sheol does not imply that all the Israelites went to hell as unbelievers. Sheol, שְׁאוֹל, means the underworld or Hades; it is the realm of death where all the Old Testament dead went, unbelievers and believers alike. There were separate places in Sheol for the believers and the unbelievers. Not only will many Israelites experience physical death, but, figuratively, the nation and Jerusalem are going to experience death and therefore descend into Sheol.

Luke 16:26 <sup>26</sup>‘And besides all this, between us [believing Abraham and Lazarus] and you [the unbelieving rich man] there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.’

The end result will be that God, the righteous, holy Creator God, is exalted.

Isaiah 5:16 <sup>16</sup>But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness.

God will be exalted in judgment because the very act of righteous judgment is a display of His holy character. He cannot tolerate sin, rebellion, and unrighteousness. The fact that He judges those things, just as He promised He would, is a vindication of His righteous character. Yahweh said He would do it, and He did it. The act of judging His own created nation, Israel, should serve as a warning to the unsaved world that God will spare no one when it is time for Him to exercise His prerogative to judge everyone and everything. His judgment is righteous and true and just, and it applies to everyone. God is holy and as such He created a people and a nation He expected to be holy as well. When they were not, His righteousness had to be vindicated.

Leviticus 19:2 <sup>2</sup>"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

It should not be surprising that this exile was predicted in the cursing promises of Deuteronomy 28. Yahweh promised it and He did it.

Deuteronomy 28:36 <sup>36</sup>"The LORD will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone.

Once the Lord's divine discipline is imposed on the nation, other people would come in and use the land as their own. It will be a sorry end to what had started so well when Yahweh brought them into the land and granted it to them.

Isaiah 5:17 <sup>17</sup>Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture, And strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy.

"The once beautiful, cultivated and rich land now ravaged by the enemy will become an uncultivated heath where stray lambs shall graze and roaming strangers shall scavenge in the land which once was so rich and prosperous" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 131].

The next woe is pronounced against those Israelites who contemptuously challenge and taunt Yahweh to rebuke and discipline them as though He does not exist. They do not believe He will discipline them.

Isaiah 5:18–19 <sup>18</sup>Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, And sin as if with cart ropes; <sup>19</sup>Who say, "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see *it*; And let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near And come to pass, that we may know *it!*"

There could be several reasons for this attitude. First, and most obviously, many of them were unbelievers (Ps. 53:1). The concept of the Remnant implies that only a small number at any one time are actually believers. The taunting aspect of this Scripture indicates that many of them were in active opposition to Yahweh. They were in effect saying, "Show us that You are real." They were not simply operating from a position of benign neglect; they were proudly reveling in disobedience and rebellion. Many of them despised Yahweh (Is. 1:4). They may have thought they were immune from divine discipline because they were Yahweh's people and that made them perfectly acceptable just the way they were, and because they had Abraham, Moses, the Temple, and the priesthood. John the Baptist addressed that situation centuries later (Mt. 3:9). Some of them may have disbelieved the promises of cursing for disobedience, or thought Yahweh was so gracious, patient, and merciful that He would break His promise to impose divine discipline (Ex. 34:6). At the least, they sought to take advantage of His gracious nature. Some of them were simply being in your face obnoxious to Yahweh. All of these things combined to induce a complacent, rebellious, unbelieving attitude in the people at that time.

Psalm 53:1 <sup>1</sup>The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good.

Isaiah 1:4 <sup>4</sup>Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him.

Matthew 3:9 <sup>9</sup>and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

Exodus 34:6 <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

"They thought that God would not act and that they knew what was better for themselves than He did.... The Israelites were deliberately sinning. They had not innocently fallen into sin, but they were pursuing it willfully. Rather than fleeing from it, they were holding it close to themselves. Even worse, they were doing so in an attempt to bait God to respond. They believed that He would not punish them. Their ties with sin were like the cords that the people used to lead their animals and the cart ropes that were much stronger and harder to break" [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, vol. IV: Isaiah-Daniel, 4:31*].

Jeremiah also addressed the complacent, rebellious mindset the Israelites displayed that Yahweh would not punish them for their insolence. Today, we might say they had an "attitude."

Jeremiah 5:12 <sup>12</sup>They have lied about the LORD And said, "Not He; Misfortune will not come on us, And we will not see sword or famine.

The picture presented in Isaiah is one of entanglement with cords of sin that drag people along and imprison them in their own sinful behavior. Only faith can break the cords of sin and the Israelites were rejecting faith. Sin is a burden that people constantly carry around with them, but the unsaved often do not realize the load they are carrying. There is a Southern Gospel song that says, "I didn't know the load I was carrying until the load I was carrying was gone."

Solomon addressed this issue long before Isaiah.

Proverbs 5:22–23 <sup>22</sup>His own iniquities will capture the wicked, And he will be held with the cords of his sin. <sup>23</sup>He will die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

The priests were derelict in their instruction of the people; therefore, they continued on their own way and remained bound to their sin.

Hosea 4:6 <sup>6</sup>My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

The next woe pictures the upside-down worldview the people developed over time. The following Scriptures reveal the unchanging nature of man's rebellious, sinful mind. Modern man has a highly developed antigod worldview.

Isaiah 5:20 <sup>20</sup>Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

This Scripture could not be stronger and it could not paint a more dismal picture of the mindset of the Israelites and their nation. When God is rejected, the worldview of Satan and his world system have to be substituted for the Word of God. Those are the only two options. Each person must decide to embrace either Yahweh or Satan, good or evil, light or darkness, and bitter or sweet. Essentially, the Israelites were displaying the same mindset that atheists hold. "These people are consciously rejecting the ability of the Almighty God to do anything, thereby essentially denying his relevance to their lives. This is how they reason: If there is no all-powerful God controlling this world and if there is no holy God who sets absolute standards of just behavior, then there is no need for us to change our ways" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture: Isaiah 1-39*, 178].

That was true then and it is still true today. Almost any issue dominating the public discourse in our nation today represents a struggle between two opposing worldviews. One of them represents good and light; the other represents evil and darkness. This presents people with a choice: choose good or choose evil, but the choice has to be made by every person. This is a case of situational ethics; people decide what is right for themselves whether it is in accordance with the Word of God or not. People decide what is right and what is wrong and reject God's Word on the subject. This is the same trap Satan set for Eve in the Garden of Eden. It worked then and it continues to work today.

John 3:19–21 <sup>19</sup>"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup>"But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

The next woe condemns those who substitute their judgment and their wisdom for the judgment and wisdom of God.

Isaiah 5:21 <sup>21</sup>Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!

I just mentioned that this was the trap Satan set for Eve. It explains why the Israelites rejected God's prophets over and over again throughout history culminating in their rejection of Messiah—who was Prophet, Priest, and King. They thought they knew better

than their God before, during, and after He actually appeared to them as a human being.

The true basis for wisdom is the fear of the Lord which the Israelites demonstrated they did not possess. Not only did they lack wisdom, they did not want to acquire it. The whole point of what is called the Wisdom literature, is a call to recognize the wisdom of God and submit to it, and, at the same time, recognize that man has no wisdom apart from the wisdom of God.

Proverbs 1:7 <sup>7</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Job 28:28 <sup>28</sup>“And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.’”

Ecclesiastes 12:13 <sup>13</sup>The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to every person*.

The next woe condemns drunken rulers and judges who pervert justice in order to enrich themselves. No orderly society can exist when the arbiters of justice are themselves corrupt.

Isaiah 5:22–23 <sup>22</sup>Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine And valiant men in mixing strong drink [שֵׁכָר], <sup>23</sup>Who justify [צַדִּיק] the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

Wine and strong drink are contrasted; they refer to two different types of intoxicating beverages. Strong drink, שֵׁכָר, is any fermented drink apart from wine made of fruit or grain which is potentially intoxicating when consumed in excess. Historians do not believe the people of that area, in that time, had the ability to distill high proof alcoholic beverages; therefore, most believe this word represents beer as opposed to wine.

This is the second time in this pericope Isaiah has addressed the issue of drunkenness (cf. Is. 5:11). The widespread abuse of alcohol—and today of drugs—is a serious drag on society and a harbinger of societal breakdown and destruction. It has a corrupting influence on those who succumb to it; it dominates life.

It should be obvious that poor people cannot afford to bribe the authorities in order to pervert justice; only wealthy people can do that. Poor people have to rely on the fairness and justice of the system as it exists. Apparently, this became a systemic problem in Israelite society at that time, and it deprived the poor people of justice—justice for those who were in the right. This action turns justice on its head. Justify, צַדִּיק, means to be in the right by being in conformance with justice, custom, law, or morality. It can also mean to be vindicated. In this case, it is those who should not be vindicated who are being declared innocent or awarded unjust judgments, and it is those who should have been vindicated who were losing their rights to justice and a righteous verdict according to the facts of the case. This issue must be related to the fact that



those in charge were “crushing [Yahweh's] people and grinding the face of the poor” (Is. 3:15), and to their acquisition of vast tracts of land (Is. 5:8).

These men are not heroes in the ordinary sense of the word; they are heroes in terms of drinking and valiant in terms of mixing drinks. They are not true heroes; they are antiheroes of debauchery and corruption, and these words are being disparagingly used to represent reprehensible conduct rather than true heroism. “They are *heroes*; not, however, in avenging wrong, but in drinking wine; they are men of renown, though not for deciding between guilt and innocence, but for mixing up the ingredients of strong artistic wines ... an artificial mixture, like date wine and cider” [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 7: Isaiah, 7:116*].

These men are an abomination to the Lord. They justify the unjustifiable, and they condemn the justified.

Proverbs 17:15 <sup>15</sup>He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

In this section of Scripture, the condemnation ends with the revelation of the consequences that will be imposed for the behavior just exposed. The nation was so spiritually and materially rotten from top to bottom that it had to be purified through a disciplinary process compared to the fire used to purify metal.

Isaiah 5:24 <sup>24</sup>Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble And dry grass collapses into the flame, So their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

They had rejected what was most important, which was the eternal Word of God, and replaced it with their own fallible, finite human reasoning driven by their sin nature.

Isaiah 40:8 <sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

The divine discipline belongs to the future, but the past tense grammar indicates it is already as good as done. The Israelites had taunted God to judge them, and now the prophet declares that judgment is coming and it is so certain that it is as good as done. This should probably be put into the category “you better watch out what you ask for— you might just get it!”

Isaiah 5:25 <sup>25</sup>On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people, And He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, But His hand is still stretched out.

We have already noted that many of Isaiah's prophecies have short-term and long-term ramifications. In this situation, the short term involves, to some extent, the Assyrian conquest of Israel, but primarily the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. However, the last sentence suggests something more, something far

into the future. The Assyrian, Babylonian, and even the Roman destructions of Israel, all of which resulted in nearly total dispersions out of the land, are not the end. We can't forget that God used Assyria to invade Judah and cause a lot of trouble before driving them out at the hands of the angel of the Lord (2 Kings 19:35). Other nations came against over time as well. Even after all that, the Israelites did not then and have not yet returned to Yahweh which will not happen until the end of the Tribulation. This last sentence seems to be a reference to the end of the Tribulation when God's anger will finally be spent and His hand will no longer be stretched out against Israel.

There is a time coming when God's anger with Israel will be spent, there will no longer be a need for the imposition of divine discipline, and the nation will be in perfect harmony with Yahweh. That will happen at the end of the Tribulation immediately before the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom. In Isaiah's prophecy, God's anger will not be dispelled after judgment falls at the hands of Assyrian and Babylon, and His disciplinary hand will remain stretched out against them.

Hosea 14:4 <sup>4</sup>I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them.

Micah 7:18–20 <sup>18</sup>Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. <sup>19</sup>He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. <sup>20</sup>You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.

Some theologians believe the reference to an earthquake happened during King Uzziah's reign (792-740 B.C.), but that cannot be correct. Earthquakes were not an uncommon problem in that area, and this prophecy refers to more than a localized earthquake in Judea. This refers to the destruction of the whole nation from border to border. The following verses identify the nature of the judgment that was going to fall. Furthermore, it is entirely plausible that the reference to the quaking of the mountains is a figurative way of expressing the terrible nature of the judgment that affects the natural order of things as well as people. "Palestine was a land of mountains; hence, to mention mountains is to give the impression of a general upheaval or commotion. It is not the trembling of the mountains which causes the death of the people, but in this trembling the effectiveness of the judgment is shown. It is the judgment itself which brings death ..." [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 1, 1:226].

Isaiah 5:26–30 <sup>26</sup>He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, And will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; And behold, it will come with speed swiftly. <sup>27</sup>No one in it is weary or stumbles, None slumbers or sleeps; Nor is the belt at its waist undone, Nor its sandal strap broken. <sup>28</sup>Its arrows are sharp and all its bows are bent; The hoofs of its horses seem like flint and its *chariot* wheels like a whirlwind. <sup>29</sup>Its roaring is like a lioness, and it roars like young lions; It growls as it seizes the prey And carries *it* off with no one to deliver *it*. <sup>30</sup>And it will growl over it in that day like the roaring of the sea. If one looks to the land, behold, there is darkness *and* distress; Even the light is darkened by its clouds.

This judgment will not be the result of an earthquake, but the result of an invasion by a distant nation—Assyria in the north and Babylon in the south. Because Israel did not learn the lessons she was supposed to learn from Assyria and Babylon, Greece and Rome would, much later, also be used by God to impose divine discipline on the nation. Finally, the antichrist will be an instrument of judgment on the nation, but at the end of it, they will believe in their Messiah and be saved. These nations have all come against Israel only at the direction of God for the divine purposes of God as part of His interaction with Israel to bring about covenant fulfillment. God will deal with the nations once His purposes for them has ended.

These verses describe very powerful well-armed, well-trained armies. The Israelites should have been scared to death over this, but they didn't believe it was going to happen.

At the end of this destruction, it is fitting to view the land as covered in darkness. Yahweh, the Light, left the Temple just before its destruction (Ezek. 10:1-22) which removed the Light from Israel. Darkness filled that vacuum, and the Light will not return until Messiah inaugurates His Kingdom.