

THE MILLENNIUM FORECAST

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 4:2-5:30

Topic

Isaiah pronounces six of twenty-three “Woes,” more than any other Old Testament prophet.

Title

“I Woe, I Woe, It’s Off To Woe I Go”

Chances are you’ve not heard of Knowles Shaw.

He was a 19th century evangelist, baptizing over 20,000. One biographer wrote, *“Crowds gathered in breathless expectation to hear the ‘Singing Evangelist.’ In mostly small towns and congregations he would mix sermons, delivered with great fervor, and hymns, led with great skill.”*

Shaw wrote around 58 hymns, in several languages, including the classic, *Bringing in the Sheaves*.

Isaiah was a singing evangelist.

We read, “Now let me **sing** to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard” (5:1).

- Isaiah’s “Beloved” is the LORD.
- “The vineyard... is the house of Israel” (5:7).
- The men of Judah are His “pleasant plant” (5:7).

The song isn't joyful; it is woeful, on account of the Jews having turned to idols *from* God.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 God Delights In Singing Joyful Songs To You**, and **#2 God Dislikes Singing Woeful Songs To You**.

#1 - God Delights In Singing Joyful Songs To You (4:2-6)

Another prophet, Zephaniah, said, "The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet *you* with His love, **He will rejoice over you with singing.**" (3:17).

I think it is safe to say God sings to, and about, all believers, not just Israel.

Before Isaiah sang the woeful song of chapter five, he gave his hearers a glimpse of their nation's joyful future. He announced characteristics of the Kingdom of God on Earth that we mostly refer to as the Millennium. We call it that because it will last for one thousand years, beginning at Jesus' Second Coming to end the Great Tribulation, followed by eternity.

A remnant of Jews will be "left" in Jerusalem, the LORD having "washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning."

This has application beyond the Babylonian captivity, to the Great Tribulation. The Jews who live through its blood and burning will be saved.

Isa 4:2 In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped.

Meet "the Branch of the LORD." Isaiah will explain the title more fully, saying, "And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots" (11:1).

- The Branch is a person who descends from the line of Jesse, the father of David.
- In the Revelation Jesus affirms, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David" (22:16).

"The fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing" during His thousand year reign over the nations. The curse inflicted upon the Earth as a result of Adam's sin will

be lifted, at least in part. Isaiah records that the earth will break forth in abundance, and desert places will produce rich vegetation (35:1-2).

Isa 4:3 And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy - everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

God always has a remnant of people. In the Tribulation, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Jews on Earth will be killed.

A remnant of $\frac{1}{3}$ will be "left." They will be "holy," meaning saved.

Isa 4:4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning,

This is a reserved, almost poetic, description of the judgments of the Great Tribulation that bring Jews to salvation.

There are a handful of names for the Great Tribulation:

- Day of the Lord (Isa 2:12)
- Day of the Vengeance of God (Isa 34:8; 63:1-6)
- The Seventieth Week of Daniel (Dan 9:24-27)
- The Time of the End (Dan 12:9)
- The Great Day of His Wrath (Rev 6:17)
- The Hour of His Judgment (Rev 14:7)
- The End of the World (Mt 13:40,49)
- The Indignation (Isa 26:20; 34:2)
- The Time of Trouble as never before (Dan 12:1)

One name which ought to be more prominent is often unused by Christians. "For behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah... Alas! For that day *is* great, So that none *is* like it; **And it is the time of Jacob's trouble**, But he shall be saved out of it" (30:3, 7).

The Great Tribulation effects all who dwell on the Earth, but its primary purpose is to *convince* and *convert* Israel. It is **not** to test or purify the church. In fact, as we teach, the church will have been resurrected and raptured prior to the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

Isa 4:5 then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering.

Isa 4:6 And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.

You can't help but think of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. Israel was protected and guided on their journey through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. That type in Exodus will become reality in the Millennium. God will dwell among His people, and He will fulfill every promise He made to Abraham's descendants.

In *Seinfeld*, Elaine's date asked her to shut-up because his song came on the radio - *Desperado*, by the Eagles. Since God sings over you... What song is He singing?

#2 - God Dislikes Singing Woeful Songs To You (5:1-30)

We don't know how often Isaiah sang. I'd like to think he did it a lot.

Music is a powerful media. Some Christians disdain modern choruses, but many of them are straight outta the Bible, if not inspired by the Bible.

I have a hard time memorizing anything, but I can remember choruses and hymns.

Isa 5:1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill.

Isa 5:2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it...

The first time someone described something as "turn key," I was stumped. It is used of a product or service that is 100% ready-to-go after it is purchased, right out of the box.

God's vineyard was turn key.

Judah was planted in a 100% ready vineyard. There was nothing for them to do except enjoy the Lord and bear fruit. Fruit is not produced by effort. It comes naturally (or in this case, supernaturally) by abiding in the vine.

Our initial reaction to the vineyard metaphor is to think that it is up to us to procure land, clear it of obstacles, and build a tower. The apostle Paul referred to it as our beginning the Christian life in the Spirit, then trying, in our unredeemed flesh, to be made perfect.

Jesus said, "It is finished!" We are to bear fruit - *that's all*.

Do we "Let go & let God?" **NO.** We day-by-day deliberately yield to the Spirit, by whom we obey the Word. That is hardly "letting go." Our spiritual passion ought to have us praying without ceasing, running the race without the weight of sin, straining forward to what lies ahead... pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Alan Redpath's insight on this: "*Give up the struggle and the fight; relax in the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus; look up into His lovely face and as you behold Him, He will transform you into His likeness. You do the beholding - He does the transforming. There is no short-cut to holiness.*"

Isa 5:2 ... So He expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes.

"Wild grapes" is an illustrative summary of verses eight through twenty-three. Those verses will show us the "wild" life in the flesh that the Jews chose over the fruitful life in the Spirit God offered.

Isa 5:3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.

Isa 5:4 What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?

Our text is about Judah, but it has further reach. For example, God gets blamed for the evil in the world. "Why doesn't God do something?" is an all-too common complaint.

God the Father says, "What more could have been done than I have done?"

It is a statement worth meditating upon. Think of the life of Jesus, from the humiliation of Him becoming man in the virgin birth, all the way through His humbling

of Himself on the Cross, and His remaining for eternity the God-man. "What more? indeed.

Isa 5:5 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; *And* break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

Isa 5:6 I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it."

Isa 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry *for help*.

Judah ought to have modeled and exemplified "justice" and "righteousness" to the surrounding nations. Because he did not, a nation would conquer Judah. That nation would be Babylon, leaving Jerusalem in the condition described.

We mostly think of our one-on-one relationship with Jesus. We must also think of our nation's relationship to the Lord.

Isaiah was prophecy's man o' Woe. He sang (maybe) a series of six "Woes."

Isa 5:8 Woe to those who join house to house; They add field to field, Till *there is* no place Where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!

Isa 5:9 In my hearing the LORD of hosts *said*, "Truly, many houses shall be desolate, Great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant.

Isa 5:10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, And a homer of seed shall yield one ephah."

The wealthier, more prosperous, Jews were profiting from the misfortune of others.

Trouble and tragedy can bring out the best in a nation. We saw a little of that after September 11th. It can also bring out the worst.

Isa 5:11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning, *That* they may follow intoxicating drink; Who continue until night, *till* wine inflames them!

Isa 5:12 The harp and the strings, The tambourine and flute, And wine are in their feasts...

This could be in almost any secular college or university handbook, and some Christian ones, describing student life on campus. When our kids were getting ready to graduating high school, Cuesta College was the preferred destination for many

Kings & Tulare county kids. Several would rent a home off campus. It wasn't to have a quiet place to study.

As the Joker said in the first Tim Burton *Batman*, "Commence au festival." Loosely translated, "*Let's get this party started!*"

Isa 5:12 ...But they do not regard the work of the LORD, Nor consider the operation of His hands.

I get asked about drinking all the time. You can drink... **But** there are a lot of '**buts**' to consider.

For example, drinking alcohol, past a certain point, relaxes moral inhibitions. People say and do things they wouldn't normally do. Shouldn't do.

A believer ought to have a heightened morality, be spiritually awake, not the opposite. The apostle Paul said, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19).

Isa 5:13 Therefore my people have gone into captivity, Because *they have* no knowledge; Their honorable men *are* famished, And their multitude dried up with thirst.

Instead of drunken feasting, they would experience hunger and thirst leading up to, and during, their 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

In verse thirteen, in the NKJV, if you eliminate the italicized words added by translators, it reads, "Because no knowledge." They did not retain the knowledge of God, but instead went their own way.

Any attack in our nation on the Word of God or the preaching of the Gospel is an attempt to not retain the knowledge of God.

Isa 5:14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself And opened its mouth beyond measure; Their glory and their multitude and their pomp, And he who is jubilant, shall descend into it.

Isa 5:15 People shall be brought down, Each man shall be humbled, And the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.

"Sheol," in the Old Testament, is a general reference to the realm of the dead. A lot of Jews would die.

Isa 5:16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, And God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.

God would be known for justice and righteousness either by Judah's repentance or by her being disciplined.

Isa 5:17 Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture, And in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat.

The land would go to pasture for unattended flocks. "Strangers" would pillage the former large estates.

Isa 5:18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, And sin as if with a cart rope;

Isa 5:19 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 near and come, That we may know *it*."

The "cords" and "rope" illustrate being attached to their sin, tied to it. It was burdensome - as if they were oxen drawing a cart.

Simultaneously, they wanted YHWH to "speed and hasten His work," and by that they meant saving them. They expected God to save them, but they would make no effort to repent of their sin.

Isa 5:20 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!

Billy Graham said, "We have changed our moral code to fit our behavior instead of changing our behavior to harmonize with our moral code. Nothing is firm today."

Things no longer need to even make sense.

Recently a Senator asked a Supreme Court nominee to define the word "woman." Her reply: "I can't."

We are legalizing just about everything that is biblical immoral. Hazen G. Werner, who served as a United Methodist bishop in Ohio, Hong Kong and Taiwan, once said: *"There is no more startling phenomenon in our day than the respectabilization of evil."*

Isa 5:21 Woe to *those who are* wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!

In upcoming chapters, Judah makes alliances with other nations, trusting them over God.

Do you have alliances with the world? Are you looking for love in all the wrong places? Everything you need for life and godly living is in the Bible, unlocked for you by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Isa 5:22 Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink,

Isa 5:23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man!

The leaders were "mighty" and "valiant" **drunkards**. It softened them to accept bribes.

The "Woes" were over; Isaiah brings it home.

Isa 5:24 Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Isa 5:25 Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them And stricken them, And the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand *is* stretched out still.

- In the 6th century BC, Babylon would ruin Jerusalem.
- During the Time of Jacob's Trouble, Babylon will again target the Jews. Read chapters 17&18 of the Revelation.

Isa 5:26 He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, And will whistle to them from the end of the earth; Surely they shall come with speed, swiftly.

The Lord would give Babylon, and "other nations" later, Israel's GPS coordinates, raising a banner, whistling to attack.

Isa 5:27 No one will be weary or stumble among them, No one will slumber or sleep; Nor will the belt on their loins be loosed, Nor the strap of their sandals be broken;

Isa 5:28 Whose arrows *are* sharp, And all their bows bent; Their horses' hooves will seem like flint, And their wheels like a whirlwind.

Isa 5:29 Their roaring *will be* like a lion, They will roar like young lions; Yes, they will roar And lay hold of the prey; They will carry *it* away safely, And no one will deliver.

Isa 5:30 In that day they will roar against them Like the roaring of the sea. And if *one* looks to the land, Behold, darkness *and* sorrow; And the light is darkened by the clouds.

This final dirge has the feel of Boromir's classic description of Mordor in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

With Judah, however, there would be no sixth century happy ending. There will be a holy ending, when the Lord returns at the end of Jacob's Trouble.

Remember the hit song, *Don't worry, Be happy?* It's gonna be in your mind now; sorry.

We talk about the pursuit of happiness, but as believers we are told to "**Pursue... holiness**, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). The apostle Peter wrote, "But as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY" (First Peter 1:15-16).

"Holy" means to be *set apart*. When you were saved, Jesus set you apart from the world for Himself. He took you out of darkness and brought you into His light. He gave you the gift of God the Holy Spirit to indwell you. You are enabled to obey Him, empowered to serve Him. By His grace you can hear Him singing with joy.

No woes, Be holy.