

Isaiah 5:8-17
February 4, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

I think we can all agree that there are many, many ways that we can sin against God. We could review the Ten Commandments for starters, and then we could read the book of Leviticus and pick up a significant list of sins that we are not to engage in. Then we can listen to the many teachings of Jesus and realize we can sin greatly just by thinking of something sinful or evil! Let's face it. There are a lot of sins we can commit, and those that occur by omission.

I'm only guessing, but we probably have our own tendencies toward certain sins than others, and the Israelites aren't any different. They tended to sin in some key areas, and we're getting ready to find out what they were.

Transition: For today's study, I want to continue the consideration from last week, which is that **all of us CAN honor God BY avoiding the SINS that the Lord's covenant people committed.** As a refresher, you will recall from last week that Isaiah sang a folk song to the Lord. He sang about his own people (v. 7) and pointed out how good God had been to them. God gave them a holy law and a wonderful land, but they broke the law and defiled the land with their sins and failed to produce fruit for God's glory. God had done for them all that He could do. Now all that remained for Him to do was bring judgment on the fruitless vineyard and make it a waste. (Note that Jesus referred to this passage in Matt. 21:33–44.)

What were the "wild grapes" that the nation produced instead of the "good grapes" that God sought for? In the six "woes" that follow, Isaiah named the sins that brought judgment on the land. Someone read v. 8-10 to get us started.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.8:

- **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. **(Materialism)**

V.9:

- The LORD Almighty has declared in my hearing: "Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants."

V.10:

- A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a bath of wine, a homer of seed only an ephah of grain."

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.8: What SIN was committed here? [Materialism; Covetousness; perhaps Greed]

Q: Is Isaiah saying that we can't enjoy God's provisions and acquire more assets? If not, how do you know when you are "sinning" by acquiring more assets? [Let people engage]

Q V.9-10: What are the consequences of materialism/covetousness? [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]

Transition: Let's look at some more SINS. Someone read v.11-17

V.11:

- **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. **(Drunkenness)**

V.12:

- 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.**

V.13:

- 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.

V.14:

- Therefore the grave (sheol) enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers.

V.15:

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

V.16:

- But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.

V.17:

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

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V. 11-12: What SINS were committed here? [Drunkenness; they had no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands]

Q: Do we need to deep-dive drunkenness? [They were enjoying all of God's blessings, while reveling in wine. They must have thought that they were favored by God and just did whatever they wanted.]

Q: If it's not drunkenness, what might this look like in today's culture? [Let people engage]

Q: His people had "no regard" for the deeds of the Lord or the work of His hands. How do we protect ourselves from slipping into that kind of mindset? [Start a journal of gratitude]

Q V.13-15: Isaiah describes the consequences for these SINS. What do you see?

- people will go into exile for lack of understanding
- men of rank will die of hunger
- their masses will be parched with thirst
- nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers will descend to Sheol

- man will be brought low and mankind humbled
- the eyes of the arrogant humbled

Q: If you had to sum it up, what's the bottom line? [They are being put to death in a foreign country through hunger and thirst.]

Q: What's in it for the Lord? [He will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.]

Q: Agree or Disagree? Isn't exaltation/glorification all the Lord has ever wanted from us? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

God has lavished abundant care and blessings upon us. But what has been the return? We have not acted in ways consistent with his nature nor have we developed character that conforms to his will. We cannot ignore God with impunity. What is sowed must also be reaped.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (p. 26). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. What Isaiah sang (Isa. 5:8–17)

What were the “wild grapes” that the nation produced instead of the “good grapes” that God sought for? In the six “woes” that follow, Isaiah named the sins that brought judgment on the land.

Covetousness (Isa. 5:8–10). In disobedience to the Law (Lev. 25:23–28; 1 Kings 21:1–3), the rich defrauded the poor and seized their land. These wealthy exploiters built large mansions and developed extensive farms, but God warned them that their houses would be empty and their harvests meager. Imagine ten acres of grapevines yielding only six gallons of wine and six bushels of seed producing half a bushel of grain!

Drunkenness (Isa. 5:11–17). The Old Testament Law did not require total abstinence, but it did warn against drunkenness (Prov. 20:1; 23:29–31; Hab. 2:15). This warning is repeated in the New Testament for believers today (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Eph. 5:18). Isaiah describes people so addicted to alcohol that they begin their revelries as soon as they wake up in the morning, and they continue their drinking till late at night. They enjoy banquets and music and get involved in drunken brawls (Isa. 5:14, NIV). But when judgment comes, these people will hunger and thirst and become “food” for the grave (v. 14). The “eaters” will themselves be eaten, and the proud drinkers will be brought low.

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Isaiah*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1042). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

7. AN INDICTMENT ON SIN (5:8–17)

Though verses 8–30 are not a part of the song in verses 1–7, they fit into Isaiah’s train of thought nicely because their six indictments (“woes”) are against the “bad fruit” the nation had been producing. Between the second and third woes God referred to the consequences of Judah’s sins (vv. 13–17); after the sixth woe He did a similar thing (vv. 24–30).

a. *Woe to materialists (5:8–10)*

5:8–10. Each of the six indictments is introduced by **Woe** (*hōy*; see comments on 3:9). Some people were acquiring much **land** at the expense of their fellow countrymen (cf. Micah 2:1–2). Selling houses permanently in a walled city was allowed under the Law, but selling houses in unwallled cities and fields was allowed only until the Year of Jubilee when the houses would revert back to their former owners. Because God had given the people the land, they were not to get rich at others’ expense. Because of this sin the big **houses** and **mansions** the people once enjoyed would be empty, for many people would be killed and, as noted in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut. 28:20–24), their crops would fail. Normally a large **vineyard** would **produce** many gallons of **wine**, but here the amount would be a mere six gallons (**a bath**). And six bushels (**a homer**) of **seed** would normally yield scores of bushels of **grain**, but ironically the grain would be only one-half a bushel (**an ephah**), just 1/12 the amount of seed sown!

b. Woe to drunkards (5:11–12)

5:11–12. Apparently heavy consumption of wine was prevalent in Isaiah’s day for this sin is mentioned in two of the six woes (cf. v. 22). People were so addicted to wine that, unlike most drunkards, they rose **early in the morning** to drink. They also stayed **up late at night**. In their revelry they enjoyed music **at their banquets**, but cared nothing for **the deeds of the LORD**. Their lack of **respect for the work of His hands** meant they abused other people made in the image of God. Caring only for their own pleasures, they had no concern for the Lord or for others.

c. Results of Judah’s lifestyle (5:13–17)

5:13–17. Because of Judah’s lifestyle she would experience several results, the worst being **exile**. Included in that experience would be death by **hunger** and **thirst** (v. 13). Many would **die**, both **nobles and masses**, since death has no respect for rank (v. 14). The carousing drunkards (**brawlers and revelers**) of whom Isaiah had just spoken (vv. 11–12) would also die (v. 14). All proud people would be humiliated (cf. 2:11–12, 17) regardless of their previous stations in life (5:15). With the houses of the wealthy ruined (cf. vv. 8–9) and desolate, **lambs** would easily **graze** there (v. 17). This destruction of the nation would lead to a display of God’s **justice** and holiness (v. 16). This does not mean that He delights in revenge. Rather, He keeps His word as spoken in the covenant. His discipline of the nation would show that He still loved her and would someday bring her back into a favored position.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (p. 1000). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

5:12 Isaiah identified a person who is blind to spiritual realities as one who cannot “perceive the LORD’S actions” or has refused to “see the work of His hands.” While claiming to welcome the Lord’s redemptive action (v. 19), they are unable to understand what He is already doing to enact His judgments. They insist on seeing the Lord at work, according to their own idea of what He is supposed to do, before they will believe in Him. Jesus rejected the idea of doing another miracle, or sign, to prove who He was (Mt 16:1–4). The people already had the Law and the Prophets (Lk 16:29–31). Isaiah understood that, eventually, God would blind the eyes of persistent unbelievers so that they would not be able to see the truth (Is 6:9–10; see Mk 4:11–12; Acts 28:27).