

## Concordia Commentary:

5:1–30 Vineyard. In vv. 1–7 Isaiah uses a skillfully developed parable to make clear Israel's failure to carry out the purpose for which God chose and blessed it as a nation: the salvation of all nations as envisioned in 2:1–4 and 4:2–6. The opening lines resemble the kind of happy song his hearers would be delighted to hear as they rejoiced over a bountiful grape harvest. Its lyrical charm is enhanced by strains reminiscent of a love song (lit. "a song of my beloved"; cf. SS 1:9 second note). Suddenly at the end of v. 2 the note of joy turns into a lament. In spite of the tender care given the vines, they did not yield grapes but rather wild grapes (more lit. a stinking, rotten mess). The application begins with v. 3. The Lord, the Owner of the vineyard, tells what kind of fruit He had a right to expect from the inhabitants of Jerusalem in return for the unstinted nurture and blessing He had bestowed on them. As any owner of a vineyard producing nothing but putrid, unusable fruit is fully justified in destroying and abandoning the very site of his pleasant planting, so the Lord will let the house of Israel become a desolate waste. (5–7)

No longer speaking in a parable, Isaiah goes on to catalog the wild grapes which came to fruition from Israel's root-sin: ungrateful rejection of God's goodness. In a series of denunciations, introduced by the exclamation woe, the prophet offers a bill of particulars, indicting the apostate nation on six counts: (1) robbing small landowners of their family estates (8–10); (2) drunken debauchery (11–17); (3) cynical scoffing at God's power to call them to account for their malicious indulgence in wrongdoing (18–19); (4) flouting standards of right and wrong (20); (5) arrogant self-will (21); (6) perversion of justice by venal judges who are heroes at drinking wine (22). In the first two "woes," sentence is pronounced immediately upon the declaration of guilt (9 f.; 3–17), whereas announcement of impending disaster, introduced by therefore, follows the last four in a separate and longer section (24–30). Because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, the fire of His anger will consume them (24 f.) when He will summon a nation afar off to execute judgment on them. (26–30)

5:2 Wine vat. In anticipation of a good harvest of grapes, the owner hollowed out a rock which would serve as a winepress.

5:5 My vineyard. For other examples of God's relationship to His people described as vines under His care see 3:14; 27:2–5; Jer 2:21; 12:10; Ps 80:8–13. See also Jesus' parable of the Vineyard. (Mk 12:1–9)

5:7 A cry. Namely for help.

5:8 House to house. By usury, extortion, and shady deals big money men gained title to houses and farms until no more room was left for the small landowner to call his own. (Am 5:10–13; Mi 2:2)

5:10 One bath. The land would become unproductive. The yield is given in ancient terms of liquid and dry measures. A bath and an ephah held about 6 gallons. Ten ephahs equaled a homer. (Cf. Ex 16:16 note)

5:12 Deeds of the Lord. In their drunken stupor the revelers gave no thought to "the miracles" and "marvels" God did in their history. (Ps 78:11 f.)

5:13 Go into exile. The prophet sees the punishment as an accomplished fact.

5:14 Its appetite. Death is compared to an insatiable beast. For Sheol see Dt 32:22 note.

5:16 Exalted. The execution of justice redounds to the glory of the Holy God.

5:17 Kids. See RSV note. The traditional Hebrew text has "aliens," i.e., nonresident people seeking pasturage for their flocks. By a slight change of one letter the Hebrew word spells kids, so translated also by the Septuagint.

5:18 Draw iniquity. The people defy God to do something about their indulgence to sin, to which they are addicted as firmly as if they were dumb animals harnessed by cords and ropes to draw a cart.

5:25 His anger is not turned away. The last two lines of this verse are a refrain with which Isaiah punctuates his message of doom in 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4.

5:26 A signal. The Hebrew word is translated also "ensign" and "standard" (11:10, 12; 13:2; 18:3; 30:17; 31:9; 49:22; 62:10). "Assyria, the rod of" God's "anger" (10:5), is able to inflict total destruction. Its soldiers, mustered and united for action under a national banner, are described in the following verses as irresistible.