

A Chorus of Woes

Isaiah 5:8-30 (vs. 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22)

The song of God's vineyard (vs. 1-7) turns into *a chorus of woes*. "**Woe**" occurs 98 times in the Bible—First mentioned in Numbers 21:29 and last in Revelation 12:12. It is a cry of denunciation; a pronouncing of a curse; an expression of sorrow, grief, misery, or of saying "*alas.*"

- Sam Jones once said, "When God says "whoa' you need to stop."

Although historically these six "woes" are aimed at Israel, they also apply to us today. Just as these evil practices drained the moral strength of Israel, they will do the same in America.

I. The "woe" of **URBANIZATION** (vs. 8-10).

➡ **Concentration of population in cities** — Sprawling housing developments, subdivisions, duplexes, apartment complexes, etc.

- A. The land was God's and could only be obtained by inheritance (Lev. 25:23). However, unscrupulous businessmen violated God's command and acquired as much property as possible, thus monopolizing the real estate market (cf. Micah 2:1-2).
 1. The poor were forced live in ghettos and slums or confined to the dwellings built by covetous real estate developers.
 2. Notice, the "*woe*" is not upon those who lived in these dwellings, but upon the selfish landowners who built the houses. The underlying **motive** behind the concentration of housing and apartments is greed—the love of MONEY.
- I don't believe God intended for families to live "stacked" on top of each other (several stories high), or so tight together you could hit the neighbor's house with a broomstick. God told man to spread out upon the face of the earth, not consolidate (Gen. 11:4-9 cf. Acts 17:26-27). The more dense a population is, the less people who are seeking God.
- Have you noticed how close houses are built together today. Statistics suggest the more concentrated a population is, the greater the crime rate and more liberal views people will hold.

For example: The city with the highest crime rate (per capita) in America is Detroit, MI—2,123 violent crimes per every 100,000 people.¹ ILLUS: Visit to Detroit in 2016.

- Huge crowds generally indicate a reduced dissemination of truth. This is because there will be more differences of opinion to be contended with. To the proportion of diverse people in one group, will be a proportion of the curtailing of truth.
 - ILLUS: No Bible believer would be allowed to address the United Nations and say the only way to heaven is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and until He returns, there will never be any peace on earth.
 - The more inter-denominational a congregation is, the more compromising of truth you will find. Since Bible doctrine is divisive, the ecumenical movement says, "Put away your doctrinal creeds."
 - Most condominiums (consolidated domain), have signs "NO SOLICITING" restricting the propagation of the truth.
- B. *"...till there be NO PLACE, **that they may be placed ALONE...**"*
- Our society is so cramped that it is becoming more difficult to escape from the pressures and crowds of people and find a place to be ALONE with God for awhile.
 - God deals with us best when we are alone.
- C. v. 9—God's voice in Isaiah's ears—A prophecy of vacant houses.
- ➡ Paul Heaton, in his commentary on Isaiah, points out...
- "...Detroit, Toledo, Chicago, Columbus, Dayton, Birmingham, Atlanta, New York City, Dallas, San Francisco, and hundreds of other like cities are full of one story, two story, and multi-story homes that are unoccupied. In Philadelphia alone they have apartment buildings in which no one DARE live due to the crime and wickedness that goes on in those areas."²

¹ <https://www.thestreet.com/story/12747294/10/the-13-most-dangerous-cities-in-america.html>

² Paul E. Heaton, *Isaiah, Volume One* (Kings Publishing Company, Lupton, MI) 1998, p. 54.

- D. v. 10— God will judge Israel’s disobedience with meager harvest—Small crops compared to the availability of land—ten acres of grapevines yielding only eight gallons of wine and six bushels of seed producing half a bushel of grain!

II. The “woe” of HEDONISM (vs. 11-17). Self-indulgence.

➡ Completely given over to worldly pleasures 24/7.

- A. DRUNKENNESS (v. 11 cf. Prov. 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35; 31:4-7; Hab. 2:15; Rom. 14:19-21; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9; Eph. 5:18).

1. Liquor **defiles** the body, **dulls** the mind, **depletes** the finances, and **destroys** the family.
2. Many crimes are the result of drinking liquor. Where booze flows, crime results.

In 2014, there were 9,967 traffic fatalities related to drunk drivers— 1/3 of all traffic deaths. One person is killed by a drunk driver every 53 minutes.³

- B. REVELRY (v. 12; Gal. 5:19-21).

1. A total disregard of the Lord (v. 12)! The reason the Jews went into captivity (v. 13— “*Therefore...*”).
2. People were so preoccupied on pleasing the flesh, they were ignorant of God’s works (coming judgment) (v. 13).
 - “...**no knowledge...**” (1:3) is a reference to not knowing God’s Word (cf. 5:24; Prov. 13:13; Hosea 4:6; Amos 8:11).
3. It is obvious many “*honourable men*” in America are “*famished*” concerning their knowledge of God’s Word.

President Harry Truman called the atomic bomb “the greatest thing since creation.”⁴ President Nixon said Apollo 11 was the greatest event since creation.⁵ With all due respect, both are wrong! If they knew their Bible they would have known

³ https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/impaired-drv_factsheet.html

⁴ Walter A. McDougall, *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy: How America's Civil Religion Betrayed* (Yale University Press, 2016)

⁵ *Ibid.*

the greatest event since creation was the resurrection of Christ! President Obama said, “The good book says don’t throw stones at glass houses.”⁶ Where does it say that? Even Donald Trump showed his ignorance of the Bible when he referred to 2 Corinthians 3:17 as “TWO Corinthians 3:17” in a speech at Liberty University.⁷ Anyone familiar with the Bible, as Trump claims he is, would know it is “*second* Corinthians,” not “TWO Corinthians.”

4. Enlargement of hell (vs. 14-15). “*Therefore...*” (v. 14). Because God is not regarded (v. 12) and rejected (v. 24), and there is “*no knowledge*” of His Word, hell opens it’s mouth to receive them when they die.
 - “...*the mean man*” [small, little] in contrast to “*the mighty man*” [great]. “*the lofty*” [high, as in a loft].

III. The “woe” of PROVOCATION (vs. 18-19).

- A. **Addiction** to sin (v. 18). Rather than resisting sin, they welcome sin with open arms. Instead of being drawn *by* sin (James 1:14), they draw sin *unto* themselves like pulling a cart towards them with a rope! It is a picture of a man pulling a wagon full of sin behind him with a rope.
- B. v. 19—Because God’s “*work*” (v. 12) of judgment (v. 16) was delayed, they provoked and defied God—“If the Lord is going to send judgment, what is He waiting for? Bring it on! Lets see it” (cf. Eccl. 8:11). It was as if they doubted God meant what He said (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-4).
 - Isaiah assures them in verses 26-30 that God WILL bring swift and speedy judgment.

IV. The “woe” of RELATIVISM (v. 20). Truth is relative.

- ➡ **Lack of absolutes / situation ethics**—Evil becomes good and good is viewed as evil

⁶ <http://time.com/3628733/obama-bible-misquote/>

⁷ <http://www.theblaze.com/news/2016/01/18/two-corinthians-trump-stumbles-over-bible-reference-but-still-wins-over-evangelical-crowd-at-liberty-university/>

- A. Perversion of moral standards (cf. Mal. 2:17; Jer. 4:22).
1. Sin is bitter (Jer. 2:19; 4:18; Acts 8:23; Heb. 12:15). Though it may seem sweet for a time (Prov. 9:17-18; Heb. 11:25).
 2. God's Word is sweet (Ps. 119:103).
- B. Re-defining and repackaging sin. The world refuses to call sin "sin" because it may damage someone's self-esteem.

Dr. Billy Bartlett tells about one of his college psychology classes: The professor challenged the class to list the behavioral traits of man. The class offered about 24 traits which the professor wrote on the blackboard. When Bartlett offered the trait of "sin" the professor refused to write it down or acknowledge it.

- Tolerance of cults and false religion is "multiculturalism."
- Killing unborn babies by abortion is called "pro-choice."
- Sodomy is called being gay or having an alternative lifestyle.
- Drunks are called chronic alcoholics.
- Profanity is called freedom of speech.
- Increased taxes are "revenue enhancements."
- Medical malpractice resulting in a patient's death is now, "a diagnostic misadventure of high magnitude."

Vance Havner said it right: "There is a growing tendency these days to excuse the evils of this generation, to gloss over its rottenness, to minimize its corruption, to spread cold cream on the cancers of iniquity, and to dust off sin with a powder puff."⁸

V. The "woe" of EGOTISM (v. 21). Proverbs 9:10—*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."*

- A. Woe to the proud intellectual who thinks he knows better God (2 Tim. 3:7). No one is as smart as they think they are (1 Cor. 8:2 —*"If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he out to know."*).

⁸ Vance Havner, *Moments of Decision*, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI) 1979, pp. 81-82.

- B. Woe to the man who sits in judgment of the Word of God and thinks he is smart enough to correct it.
- C. Woe to the man who has a higher opinion of himself than God.
 - 1. “Self-image” is not as important as the world says it is. What is important is how you and I appear **in God’s sight**.
 - 2. See Prov. 3:5-7; 12:15; 23:4; 26:12; Jer. 9:23-24; Rom. 1:22; 11:20, 25; 12:3, 16; 1 Cor. 1:27; 3:18-20

VI. The “woe” of **INJUSTICE** (vs. 22-25 cf. Prov. 17:15).

- ➡ Because they’ve given themselves over to strong drink, they lost their sense of justice (28:7). Injustice and crookedness prevail, and the righteous are falsely accused.

SUMMATION: Isaiah follows this list of “woes” with the word “*therefore*.” The reason for God’s wrath poured out upon the sin of His people.

The phrase in verse 25 about God's anger (“...*his hand is stretched out still*”) is repeated in 9:12, 17, 21, and 10:4. God’s hand was raised in judgment and He will not lower it until the judgment was complete.

- ➡ Two metaphors describe God’s impending judgment.

1. **A raging FIRE** (vs. 24-25). “*Fire*” is describes the NATURE of God's wrath. As fire flares when it touches dry fuel, so the anger of God is aroused by the dead rot of sin (v. 25).
2. **A risen FLAG** (v. 26-30). An “*ensign*” is a flag or banner that people rally to. Prior to WW1 a raised flag would lead the troops into battle.
 - The fire tells **WHY God's judgment would come**.
 - The ensign speaks of **HOW God's judgment will come**. The raised flag/banner, accompanied by a whistle (hiss) will summon a juggernaut of heathen armies to trample the land and take God’s people into captivity. [God will often judge a nation by raising up another nation to come against it.]
 - “...*come with speed swiftly* [about 400 miles]: *None shall be weary... nor sleep... nor the latchet of their shoes be broken... light is darkened in the heavens*” indicates this is also prophetic (v. 30—“*in that day*”)—The invasion of Palestine by the Antichrist

at the end of the tribulation (see Dan. 11:40; Mt. 24:29; Luke 21:25; Rev. 9:2, 13-19; 16:10-16).

- ➡ As God said in verse 5, He removed the protective hedge around Judah allowing the invading army of Assyria (7:17-18) to come in.