

Isaiah Lesson 4 Articles

The preacher became a troubadour and sang a folk song to the Lord (“my beloved”). Perhaps the people who had ignored his sermons would listen to his song. 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.)¹

5:7. **The vineyard** in this song is identified as **Israel** and **Judah**. As elsewhere in Isaiah, “Israel” is sometimes a synonym for the Southern Kingdom (Neh. 1:6; 13:3). Delighting in His people, God wanted good fruit, that is, **justice** and **righteousness** (cf. comments on Isa. 1:21). Instead He **saw** only **bloodshed** (cf. 1:15) and **heard cries of distress**. Because of its “bad grapes” (injustice) most people would be killed or taken into captivity. Isaiah used two interesting cases of assonance (similarity in word sounds) to stress the contrast between what God expected in His people and what happened to them. “Justice” (*mišpāt*) was replaced with “bloodshed” (*mišpoḥ*), and instead of “righteousness” (*ṣedāqâh*) there was “distress” (*se‘āqâh*).²

5:18–19. Perhaps Isaiah referred here to people who were genuinely questioning whether God was in control of the nation. Though attached to **sin** and **wickedness** by **CORDS** and **ROPES** (i.e., deeply involved in sin) they wondered if God could save their nation. Apparently they wanted **God** to deliver them even though they did not want to give up their sinful practices. They wanted to **see** God act (**let Him hasten His work**) without any spiritual change on their part. However, deliverance, both personal and national, does not work that way. A spiritual change must be made before God will save His people from destruction.³

5:12 —God gives us music and food and celebrations to enjoy, but never to enjoy apart from Him or instead of Him or in neglect of Him. He is to be at the center of all we do, all the time.

5:20 —When God in His Word calls something evil, it is evil. When He labels a thing bitter, no multitude of religious authorities can make it sweet through their solemn declarations. God is our absolute authority.⁴

THE MAGNET OF ZION

One day God will establish Jerusalem as the center of his universal reign of peace. Isaiah describes Jerusalem as ‘Mount Zion’ rising higher than any other mountain. She will be the place where God lives and from which he reigns. All the nations will make pilgrimage to her, and God’s wise judgments will be issued from her.

God’s wise ruling will bring peace to the nations, so that the weapons of war can be turned into implements for farming and fruit-growing (Isa 2:4).

Micah has the same prophecy as Isaiah (Micah 4:1–3). Either one has copied from the other, or both have used a popular poem or song.⁵

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 25–26). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{2,3} 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; 1043). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Is 5:12–20). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.

⁵ Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed., p. 277). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.