

The Parable of the Vineyard Yesha'yahu 5:1-7

In my last post, we examined **The Branch of the Lord in Yesha'yahu 4:2-6**. In this post, we look at **The Parable (or Song) of the Vineyard in Yesha'yahu 5:1-7**.

Grapes were among the basic staple products of the ancient Near East, and therefore the care necessary for a vineyard was well known. In the rocky and hilly terrain of **Isra'el** special care had to be taken to preserve the soil and the moisture necessary to produce good fruit. As the rocks were cleared from the hillside, the stones were used to create terraces to level the ground. This would prevent water drainage and soil erosion. More stones were used to build huts and watchtowers that would be used to protect the crop when it neared harvest time. Constant weeding between the rows of the vine was necessary to prevent weeds from springing up and sapping off the water supply in the soil. Various irrigation techniques were used to assure enough groundwater. If the ground did not have adequate moisture or if the vines were not pruned back, the resulting crop would be small and sour. Finally, some of the stones were also used for winepresses and cisterns on the site so that the grapes could be processed without risking damage during transportation.

Perhaps one of the most impacting teachings of **Yeshua** dealt with a vineyard. In John 15, **Yeshua** told His talmidim that He was the vine, they were the branches, and that they must abide in Him and cling to Him if they were to be fruitful in their lives. Where did **Yeshua** get this illustration? I believe He got it from His Father for here in **Yesha'yahu 5**, God the Father, through the prophet **Yesha'yahu**, also talks of the parable of the vineyard.

This song has been identified as a parable, an allegory, and a love poem. Whatever its precise genre, its message is clear and compelling. It uses imagery to make the point that the people of God deserve the punishment coming their way. While previous oracles have hinted at hope beyond the judgment, this poem does not.

¹ I want to sing a song for someone I love, a song about my loved one and His vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² He dug up its stones and cleared them away, planted it with the choicest vines, built a watchtower in the middle of it, and carved out in its rock a winepress. He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only sour, wild grapes. ~
Yesha'yahu 5:1-2 (CJB)

The loved one in the song turns out to be none other than God Himself, and His vineyard stands for His people (v. 7). The singer continues by describing the labor that went into preparing the vineyard. To create a vineyard was no easy matter. There was a period of a few years that passed from clearing the area of stones, planting expensive vines, and building a tower and a winepress. Similarly, God expended great effort in creating the right conditions for **Isra'el** to flourish as a godly nation. But despite all the work, the vineyard produced worthless grapes. This signified that the people of God did not live up to their promise of being an obedient and blessed people who would also bless the nations around them.

³ "Now, citizens of Yerushalayim and people of Y'hudah, judge between Me and My vineyard. ⁴ What more could I have done for My vineyard that I haven't already done in it? So why, when I expected good grapes, did it produce sour, wild grapes? ⁵ "Now come, I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge, and [its grapes] will be eaten up; I will break through its fence, and [its vines] will be trampled down. ⁶ I will let it go to waste: it will be neither pruned nor hoed but overgrown with briars and thorns. I will also order the clouds not to let rain fall on it." ⁷ Now the vineyard of Adonai-Tzva'ot is the house of Isra'el, and the men of Y'hudah are the plant He delighted in. So, He expected justice, but look - bloodshed! - and righteousness, but listen - cries of distress! ~ Yesha'yahu 5:3-7 (CJB)

This passage is an awesome indictment against the nation of **Isra'el**, for, in it, the Lord essentially says, *"I have blessed you. I have worked with you. I have given so much to you. You are My vineyard, but as I look for fruit in your nation, I find nothing but wild, bitter grapes."* God had indeed blessed the people of Isra'el. He had brought them into a land that was flowing with milk and honey. He had blessed them exceedingly abundantly. But, although they enjoyed the gifts of God, they forgot all about God Himself.

I see a very real parallel between the people of ancient **Isra'el** and our own country. God has blessed us greatly as a nation. He has blessed us with great freedom and incredible prosperity. And yet we have forgotten Him. We think it is our Constitution, our democratic government, or the free enterprise system that has made us great. We think we have done this by our ingenuity, creativity, or hard work. We congratulate ourselves, all the while forgetting God.

What were the **wild grapes** that the nation produced instead of the **good grapes** that God sought for? In the six **woes** that follow, **Yesha'yahu** named the sins that brought judgment on the land.

Are we no different than those ancient Israelites?

In my next blog, we will begin to explore the **Woes and Judgments of Isra'el** in **Yesha'yahu 5:8ff.**