Isaiah 5:20-21

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!

Isaiah chapter 5 in a nutshell

 Verses 1-7 is often called, "The Song of the Vineyard", as it looks upon the people of Israel & Judah as God's vineyard, with God acting as the vineyard's diligent manager

 The song is not ultimately a happy one, however, as Isaiah describes the profoundly disappointing output from the vineyard after the Lord's diligent work to prepare & support it

Isaiah chapter 5 in a nutshell

 Verses 8-23 lists the behaviors & mindsets of the people of Judah as they drift away from the things that God has clearly told them, living in total disregard for what God has said

Here is a verse that

secular documents

"urban planning" &

"civil engineering"

where the layout

of entire cities is

in view

is quoted even in

& textbooks on

Feeling a bit S

 Then verses 24-30 begin to outline the great distresses that are about to come upon the people of Judah for their bold but blind disregard for God's explicit directions for them & their nation

Isaiah 5:8, "Woe

to those who add

join field to field.

until there is no

you have to live

of the land!"

house to house and

more room, so that

alone in the midst

Sometimes God gives people tough assignments

- rulers & the entire population of Judah a message that they did not want to hear
- Isaiah had to stand out in contrast to the lifestyle, views & values of most of the people of Judah
- Isaiah had to tell the Though we are of the God-created body called the Church, God may also put us in difficult roles
 - · Our role may be tough because God's grace is not always welcomed, nor is it easily understood

Isaiah 5:20

Woe to those who:

- call evil good, and good evil
- substitute darkness for light and light for darkness
- substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

This is a statement of woe, followed by three statements which rhyme meanings, each of which is given as a "mirror image" of words

Will the real "woe" please...

- · A "woe" is an expression of pain or grief, which is experienced in the present and / or anticipated in the future
- It can be expressed by someone about themselves, or...
- A woe can be expressed by someone else about another, as Isaiah is doing in this passage, as he anticipates the consequences of the moral & spiritual confusion of many

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What else can we Isaiah's six woes in chapter 5: "Woe to those who..." say about a "woe"? "Woe" is not even · Isaiah uses the • (5:8) "...add (5:20) "...call word "woe" for house to house ... " about just a minor evil good, and others & even for good evil ... " irritation, or a small • (5:11) "...rise pain that just barely himself, as we'll see • (5:21) "...are wise early... pursue gets your attention in the next chapter strong drink ... " in their own eyes ... " A "woe" that comes Isaiah will use the • (5:18) "...drag (5:22) "....are to pass is so severe word "woe" over 20 iniquity with the heroes in drinking & so devastating that times, & six of those cords of wine..." one can think of little will be in this fifth falsehood ... " or nothing else chapter Isaiah 5:20 Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who: Woe to those who: • call evil good, and good evil • call evil good, and good evil substitute darkness for light and substitute darkness for light and light for darkness light for darkness substitute bitter for sweet and substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! sweet for bitter! This 1st of the three warnings is guite directly This 2nd of the three warnings is a use of light 7 & clearly about the intended or negligent darkness as metaphors for that which is based confusion of spiritual & moral definitions in God or is founded in the absence of His life

Isaiah 5:20

Woe to those who:

- call evil good, and good evil
- substitute darkness for light and light for darkness
- substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

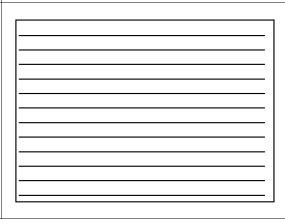
This 3rd of the three warnings uses a metaphor contrasting tastes to make vivid the powerful spiritual & moral distinctions at issue

Death is separation from His life

"So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way ... " - Ephesians 4:17-20

Good vs. Evil: A common theme

- versus evil as the principal theme of entertainment, the justification for many aspects of human government & as a central focus of this world's religions, organized or not
- The world pits good
 But God has revealed in Scripture that He is infinitely & absolutely holy & the ultimate definition of "good"
 - Evil is not principally defined by opposition to God, but by the absence of His life & separation from God



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The death-driven search for an alternate life source

 Due to the chronic lack of the life of God, the deathdriven search is for an alternate source of the that life, to plug that gaping hole that was made to be filled with His life & none other

· The "mvth" that this world sells with great intensity is that there is life to be found outside of Him

· Spiritual death is therefore called the source of life & from there the inevitable truth reversals begin

The deluge of death

- · Because the world is forced by their separation from the life of God to call "life" what is really based in death, all the moral & spiritual reversals that follow are an automatic & obvious "no brainer"
- "personal preference" or "to each his own"
- · "born that way" or "a product of his or her environment"
- "what feels right" or "what's right for me"
- "You deserve..."

Trifling with toxicity

- Calling good evil and evil good is not inconsequential
- In the same way that we don't pull fatal toxins out of the refrigerator & put them on the dinner table without any consequence...
- We cannot take what flows from spiritual death & call it life without consequence
- · The world does not have good answers & cannot offer real life, no matter how good the ads look

Romans 6:4

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism [being placed] into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness [characterized by a new kind] of life.

Identification with Christ is God's solution everything else is the world's solution



Moral relativism is not a new idea

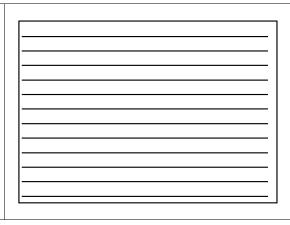
- Moral relativism says that there is no absolute basis for judging what is right or wrong
- "What is right or wrong can only be judged between humans within a cultural setting"
- · That is exactly what Isaiah is addressing in this passage!
- · If cultural settings provide the only boundaries for moral decisions, then what is called "right" in one culture can be called "wrong" in another

Good & evil have an absolute definition because of God's absolute character

- God does not define
 As Isaiah has & will good & bad morality among humans just because He enjoys making arbitrary rules for human beings as part of a grand but actually inconsequential cosmic game
- continue to declare, God is "the Holy One of Israel'
 - · Holiness is not something that is characteristic of Him from outside of Himself, or that He "personally favors"

God's absolute holiness was expressed in the Law given to Israel

- · God's absolute holiness was expressed to Israel by means of the Law given to Israel (Romans 7:12)
- God said to them: ...vou shall be holy, for I am holy." - Leviticus 11:45
- The people of Israel were blessed or cursed based upon their obedience or disobedience to that given Law, because the Law was a direct expression of God's absolute moral character



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Then how is God's absolute holiness expressed in the Church?

- In the eternal position in which God has placed us, because we have placed our faith in Him, we are holy (1 Corinthians 3:17)
- Our best efforts are not what make us or reveal us as "good"

 God's absolute holiness, then, is expressed in & through those in the Church as they, by faith, depend upon the very person & life of Christ to be lived out daily in & through each one

There are those who will say...

- If someone has a personal problem, it's because of poor self image (no inner confidence, doubts their own adequacy)
- Or, the problem is too good of a selfimage (waaaay too confident or proud)
- But Isaiah points out the real problem with humanly-based wisdom & insight:
- They are assessing their own wisdom by human measure & human viewpoint, based on human observations

Isaiah 5:21

Woe to those who are:

- wise in their own eyes and
- clever in their own sight!

This verse is all about how human beings assess their humanly based wisdom & cleverness – the sufficiency of insight & understanding to deal with real life; it addresses the basic & critical question: "Where does wisdom come from?"

Numbers 15:37-40

The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, 38 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. 39 It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, 40 so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God."

Romans 11:25

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in

1 Corinthians 1:23-24

...but we preach <u>Christ crucified</u>+, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, <u>Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God</u>++.

+ the first of the five ways that we have been identified with Christ

++ power of God: Ephesians 1:18-21 & the wisdom of God: Colossians 3:16-17

Just how good are human beings at figuring out what's wise?

- Human beings can indeed be full of genius, cleverness & insight, as humans measure those:
- "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Proverbs 14:12

 But if it's life you want, then Jesus Christ is the sole source, for salvation & for daily life, for the one who believes, until we see Him face to face (1 John 3:2; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:1-4)