He Lifts Up a Banner for the Distant Nations
5: 26-30

He lifts up a banner for the distant nations DIG: What will be the climactic judgment they have to face? What are these invaders like? How will this prophecy be fulfilled by Assyria during Isaiah's lifetime (see Second Kings 18:17-24) and later by Babylon (see Second Kings 25:1-7)?

REFLECT: What lessons from war do you think the LORD wants you to learn? Does the woeful reality of this chapter make you hunger all the more for the hopeful vision of 2:1-4? Why is it that some people never appreciate the good news of peace without first hearing the bad news of war?

Earlier, **Isaiah** had described **the wild grapes** of **the vineyard (5:8-25)**, and pointed to **the Israelites** coming destruction in **5:13-17** and **24-25**. Now **he** makes that allusion explicit in a powerful piece of poetry. The wild animals are called and now come to trample **the vineyard**. For those who mocked **Isaiah** and asked for **God** to hurry **His** work, **Isaiah** now assures **them** that **God's** plan will come much more suddenly than **they** could ever imagine. **He** does not reveal who the destroyer will be here; that will come later. For **him**, the point was to indicate the imminent, irresistible destruction that was to come.

Here **the prophet** introduces the theme that will be expanded later, especially in **10:5-34. The** Gentile **nations** are but an instrument in **the LORD's** hands. This is how the judgment will come: **ADONAI lifts up a banner for the distant nations** as a signal for war**, He whistles for those at the ends of the earth** as **they** rise and move toward **their** target**. Here** Egypt, Assyria and Babylon **come swiftly and speedily! (5:26).** A common custom in the east is that of calling the attention of anyone in the street by a significant hiss or **whistle**. In the prophecy of **Zechariah**, **God** says concerning the children of Ephraim: **I will** hiss or **signal for them and gather them in . . . (Zechariah 10:8).** Here there is doubtless a reference to the same custom of calling attention by a hiss or **whistle**.[16]

A rapid and remorseless attack of **the enemy** army would be at hand. **Not one of them grows tired or stumbles, not one of them slumbers or sleeps; not a belt is loosened at the waist, not a sandal thong is broken (5:27).** There would be no stragglers, stumbling or sleepiness. No one would be half-prepared, with broken sandals or equipment.

Next **Isaiah** describes the speed of **their** attack. The cynical request that **God** hurry up in **5:19** finds **their** wishes fulfilled here. **The enemy's** weapons are prepared, with **arrows** sharpened and **bows** already **strung**, ready for action. **Their horses' hooves** are hard as **flint**, so they will not break down on the journey, and the **chariot wheels** are turning so fast that they blur **like a whirlwind (5:28).**

Pictures of the irresistible predator and inescapable storm complete **Isaiah's** prophecy of doom. **Their roar is like that of the lion, they roar like young lions** in their prime strength**.** The doubling here points to the wide-range of the attack. **Isra'el** would be facing every possible kind of predator. **They growl as they seize their pray and carry it off with no one to rescue** them**. In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea.** The end result **will** be that **if** anyone looked **at the Land, they** would **see** nothing but **darkness and distress; even the light will be darkened by the clouds (5:29-30)**. No matter where **they** look, everything was black. The devastation would be complete. Like the lion, once the invader has seized its prey and begins to drag it off, there will be no one to deliver **Y'hudah** from its mouth.

To get a comprehensive picture of **the vineyard motif** we need to put **five elements** together. In **the first element**, in **Psalm 80**:**8-11**, **ADONAI** took a vine out of Egypt and planted it in the land.

In **the second element**, in **Isaiah 5:1** through **7, God looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit**. Because it produced sour grapes, it became desolate. **Jeremiah 2:21** says the same thing. In **12:10-11**, the ones ultimately responsible for bringing desolation on **the vineyard** are clearly **the shepherds** or **leaders of Judah**. In **Hosea 10:1-3**, **the LORD** says that **the vine** was productive, but only in producing bad fruit. In this case, **the wild grapes** are a symbol of idolatry. Therefore, no matter what **God** did for **the plant**, the end result was always **bad fruit**.

The third element of this motif is found in **Matthew 21:33-45**, and there are also some elements in **Jeremiah 12:10-11.** The leadership is responsible for the desolation of the vineyard. Just like **Jeremiah** said, **the shepherds of Judah**, **the ones** responsible for the destruction of **the vineyard**, were **the Sadducees** and **the Pharisees**. **They** had rejected **the Landowner's** servants, or the prophets, and now **they** were going to reject **His Son**. **Wicked tenants** controlled **the vine**. The key emphasis in the prophets and the gospels is that **the Jewish leadership** is responsible for leading the nation astray.

The fourth element, in **Psalm 80:12-19**, is that ultimately the vine will seek justice and help from **ADONAI**. In **verse 17** of that same psalm, the specific **One** that **they** are asking for is **the Son of Man** sitting at the **right hand** of **God**. In other words, the vine will request the return of **the Messiah**.

That will lead to **the fifth element** in **Isaiah 27:2** through **6**, when **the vineyard** seeks **God's** help and returns to **Him** in the Millennial Kingdom (see the commentary on **Revelation, to see link click Ev** – **The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**). At that point of **Isra'el's** seeking help and returning to **God**, it will produce good fruit. The vine and **the vineyard** is one of the motifs that **God** uses for **Isra'el**.