

Pentwater Bible Church

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Woes in Revelation 9:1 Artist Unknown

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Twelve

THE SIX WOES UPON SINFUL ISRAEL

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Isaiah 5:8–23

⁸Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land! ⁹In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. ¹⁰For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah. ¹¹Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them! ¹²And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

¹³Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst. ¹⁴Therefore Sheol hath enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth among them, descend into it. ¹⁵And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are humbled: ¹⁶but Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness. ¹⁷Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall wanderers eat.

¹⁸Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope; ¹⁹that say, Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! ²⁰Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ²¹Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! ²²Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; ²³that justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him (ASV, 1901)!

INTRODUCTION TO THE WOES TO ISRAEL

The six woes the prophet casts upon Israel each involve a love for the world's ways in some fashion or other. Eagerness to indulge the fleshly desires as the apostle Paul depicts in Galatians chapter five will eventually if pursued result in judgment by God. The leaders of the nation Israel had engaged in a man center desire instead of the God centered pursuit which led to their ruin. These are materialistic sins which always need to be guarded against because leaving the pursuit of God and going after the desires of the flesh instead will result in dreaded consequences.

Galatians 5:16–21

¹⁶ This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. ¹⁸ But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (quarreling) emulations (jealousy), wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings (orgies), and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (KJV).

Human behavior being led from the flesh has not changed since the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The apostle depicts some of the attitudes which Isaiah cited the leaders of the nation Israel carrying out against their fellow citizens. The same holds true today, with leaders in government and the Church lording it over those whose charge they were given to lead and care for not to use and harm.

THE FIRST WOES TO ISRAEL

Isaiah 5:8–10

⁸Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land! ⁹In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. ¹⁰For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah (ASV, 1901).

This first woe specifically cites the practice of wealthy land owners in Israel who would simply encroach their property on an adjacent property of a poor or defenseless neighbor and leave no place for the poor person to live and grow their own crops (Jeremiah 22:13–17; Micah 2:2; Habakkuk 2:9–12). What they ended up doing was isolating themselves off from the poor while leaving them no place to live. The prophet is expressing God's anger with them in asking if they think that the poor and weak are not entitled to a portion of the land? That only the wealthy and powerful have a right to it? Selling houses permanently within a walled city was allowed under the Mosaic Law, but selling houses in unwalled cities and fields was allowed only until the Year of Jubilee when the houses would revert back to their former owners. Because God had given the people the land they were not to get rich at others' expense (Deuteronomy 28:20–24). Now God gives the punishment for these wealthy and powerful land owners *Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.* Because of their sins of oppressing the poor their big houses and mansions they once enjoyed at others expense would result in their own crops failing. They would be sent into exile and the homes would be abandoned. Their punishment of war, famine, and desolation would find their once fertile land of ten acres of vineyard only yielding a one bath (10 ½ gallons) of wine. And six bushels (a homer) of seed normally yielding scores of bushels of grain, but now the grain would be only one-half a bushel (an ephah), just 1/12 the

amount of seed sown. God can control the weather and bring invaders in to destroy what He chooses.

WOE NUMBER TWO

Isaiah 5:11–17

¹¹Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them! ¹²And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands.

¹³Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst. ¹⁴Therefore Sheol hath enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth among them, descend into it. ¹⁵And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are humbled: ¹⁶but Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness. ¹⁷Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall wanderers eat.

The second woe is the longest given and is directed towards those wealthy people who continually engage in a lifestyle of parties, over eating, and getting drunk from early in the morning until late at night (Isaiah 22:12–14; 28:7–8; Amos 4:1–3). Because they stay in this intoxicated condition they cannot see God’s Laws nor recognize His control over all events (Amos 6:4–6; Daniel 5). The continual drunkenness causes them to pursue lustful indulgences. When people give in to their fleshly desires they get addicted to them. With the sensual music they played at their drunken orgies it incited them to increase the drinking and immorality. Assyria, which will soon be used as God’s instrument to express his judgment (Isaiah 10:5–6), was even then emerging as a serious threat against Judah. The LORD would punish his people by letting the Assyrians take them into exile. There they would lose all their privileges gained in an illegal and immoral manner (Hosea 4:6). All this has been caused by the fact that there is no “knowledge” of the LORD, which means no fellowship with and true worship of the living God. They abandoned God for fleshly pleasure.

Because of this there will be a large number of people entering Hell which was the bad side of Sheol the Old testament cited for the place of the dead (see chart). The most distinguished citizens along with the mediocre would all descend into Hell. This is because they all rejoiced with the prosperity that was ill gotten at the expense of the poor, weak and defenseless.

After this happens the adjacent nations and the surviving Israelites would become quite humble and seek the face of God. When proud people are humbled God is honored with the justice He metes out. Good people are also relieved at God exerting His justice. *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner;* is a metaphor for the good people of the Israelites living in peace and contentment because the wicked are no longer going to rob them. Finally, the people who remain will eat from the land which, the greedy and wicked had seized from them.

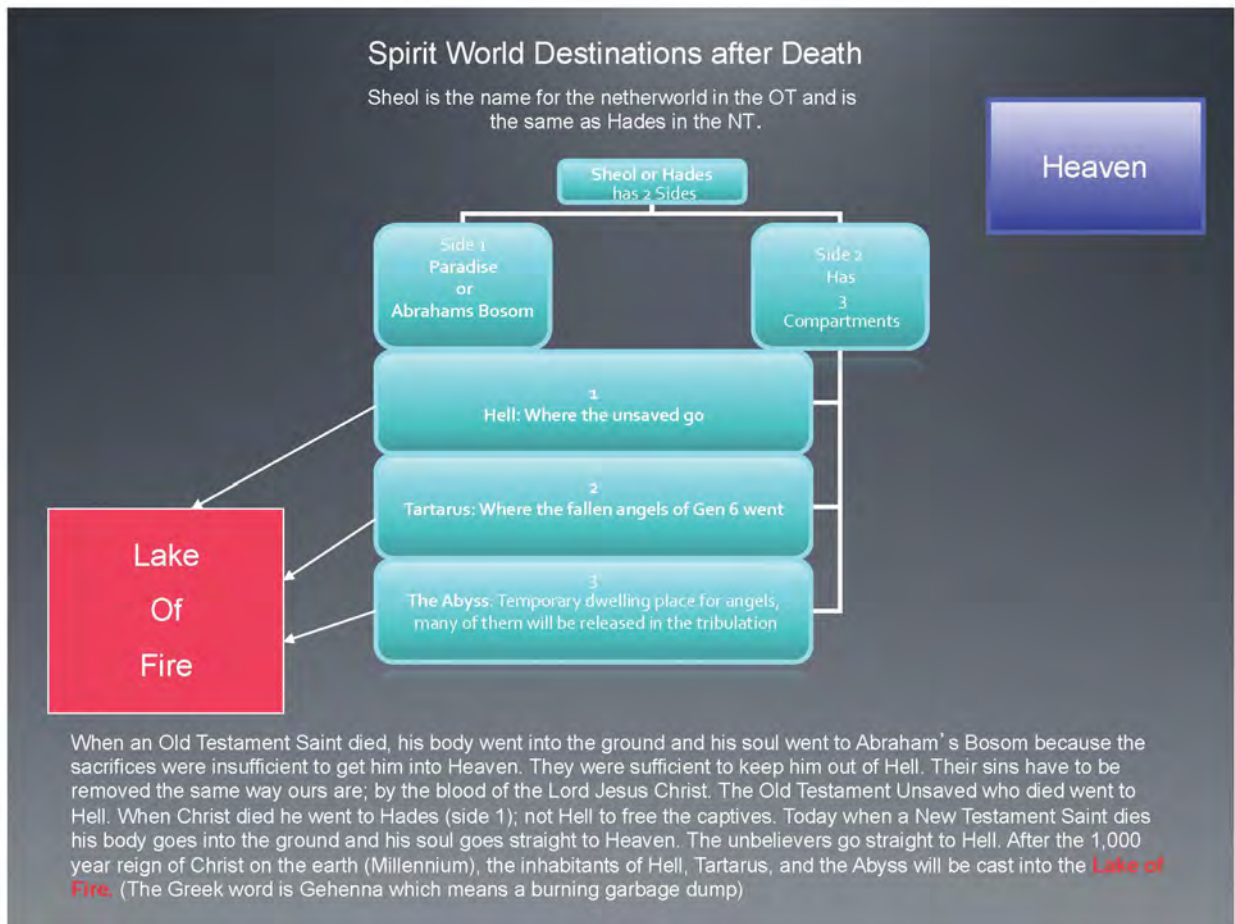


Chart by Daniel E Woodhead

WOE NUMBER THREE

Isaiah 5:18–19

¹⁸Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope; ¹⁹that say, Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it (ASV, 1901)!

This woe expressed in quaint Hebrew with illustrations of a cart being pulled by a cord of rope that is weak and easily broken. The central teaching here is that one needs to resist temptation to sin when the desire is weak namely like a flimsy cord, *cords of falsehood*. This is a self-deception and yielding to sin when the temptation comes in. The is as if it was a cord of nothingness which would easily have been broken. But, these people pursued the temptation until it was and addiction and finally a way of life. Such is the nature of sin. When it continues we get used to it and it becomes tolerated, then accepted, then implemented into law and finally celebrated. Sin fully

developed is like an unbreakable cord. If someone lets the sin continue it becomes increasingly harder to free himself of it. These are human practices that carry over into the New Testament

I Corinthians 10:13

¹³ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (KJV).

James 1:13–15

¹³ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴ but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (KJV).

The natural man who is living in the flesh instead of the Spirit will say they don't believe that these things they do are wrong and there will be a judgment. Then in their ignorance they mock God saying, "let God bring this judgment as retribution for our actions." They don't really know God and therefore don't accept the admonition of the prophet who speaks out against their behavior. The sinners just deny they have done anything wrong. With the attitude that many had in Israel and still do to some extent today because of their special place in God's plan for this earth they don't believe they will be punished. Some always think they can sin all they want because forgiveness is available. This is not true as the apostle tells us in the book of Romans. In the first century some were "*turning the grace of our God into licentiousness*" (Jude 4) by teaching that God's grace would cover the sins of a person who just kept on living a life of sin. To combat this error Paul asks: "*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*" (Romans 6:1). His reply is unequivocal, "*By no means. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live in it any longer?*" (Romans 6:2).

WOE NUMBER FOUR

Isaiah 5:20

²⁰Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (ASV, 1901)!

Now comes one of the statements that are true for every generation of people since the creation. God will bring a severe judgment on those who distort the truths of good and evil. Woe to those who consider their deed good, but actually are exchanging light for darkness. Light is an illumination of God's moral requirements for us and darkness is where they hide to do their evil fooling themselves into thinking that they are outside of God's awareness. Since they lack the awareness of Who it is that makes darkness into light their sense of taste to discern sweet from bitter is distorted as well. Their over indulgence in drinking and eating distorts their awareness of His moral laws and fall victim to the wiles of the Devil. Because they enjoy the corrupt and evil

ways of the world which are truly bitter they rationalize that the genuine sweetness of God's ways is bitter and therefore undesirable and they begin to believe that bitter sin is actually sweet.

WOE NUMBER FIVE

Isaiah 5:21

²¹Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight (ASV, 1901)!

This refers to those who are inflated with a false opinion of their own knowledge, and who are therefore pridefully self-confident and vain. The Lord forbids this '*Be not wise in thine own eyes;*' (Prov. 3:7, 26:12). In their own opinion, or estimation they flatter themselves with an inflated view of their own attitude and manner of living. True wisdom derives from God and is to be found only with Him. When a person neglects the source of true wisdom it leaves open only one other source, namely, the satanic influence which enters the human mind, and that wisdom which comes from the human mind does not originate with God. While a person thinks humbly of himself, there is still a chance that he may repent and change. When he is "*wise in his own eyes,*" he does not see why he should change. The fifth woe affirms the folly of people who are completely self-sufficient, who depend on their own reason, their own deliberations, and their own naïve wisdom, but all the while they reject all God's laws. In doing so they consider themselves to be wiser than God, "*wise in their own eyes,*" in not accepting that God has provided true wisdom for us on the earth.

WOE NUMBER SIX

Isaiah 5:22–23

²²Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; ²³that justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him (ASV, 1901)!

At first reading this woe seems to be a repetition of the second. But there is a difference, that is cited here. These government officials do not completely succumb to their liquor, or imbibe all day. They carry out their business such as attending to courts and judicial causes. Here is the distinction. Because of the continued heavy strong drinking their moral vision is no longer clear, so that they easily succumb to a bribe. The sixth woe may be considered as a pronounced upon their corruption because of their heavy drinking, and so it is really quite distinct from the second woe. Rather than being heroes and good government authorities, many leaders were known for their heavy drinking. They were ready to be bribed, not caring for the people they were ruling. They were more concerned for their own pleasure than for the rights of the weak, poor and vulnerable. Therefore *they* (those leaders) would be judged.

Next message: WOES UPON SINFUL ISRAEL

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