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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 5.

(2015)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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Isaiah 5.

Topics.

- My beloved had a fertile vineyard, but it yielded wild grapes.
- Jerusalem and Judah; judge between me and my vineyard.
- My vineyard will be trampled down I will make it a waste.
- Woe to those who join house to house and who add field to field.
- Woe to those who are prideful, arrogant and love drinking strong wine.
- Woe to those who speak falsehoods, love sin, iniquity and wrongdoing.
- Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.
- Woe to those who are shrewd in their own sight.
- Woe to those who take bribes and deprive the innocent of their right.
- They have rejected the law of the LORD and despised His word.
- Their roaring is like a lion they seize their prey and none can rescue.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw

the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

Isaiah 5

My Beloved had a Fertile Vineyard, but it Yielded Wild Grapes.

Isaiah 5:1-2 ----- ¹Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ²He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

Isaiah's beloved: refers to the LORD.

The vineyard: refers to the house of Israel (i.e., Judah and Israel). (v7)

The fertile hill: refers to Mount Zion.

He dug it and cleared it: refers to God giving Israel victory over the nations on the Mountain of Zion and the city of Jerusalem and it becoming the capital city of Israel.

The choice vines: refers to God's people

The watchtower: refers to the temple of God and the Levitical priesthood.

God hewed out a wine vat in it: means God removed corruptness and wickedness from amongst His people and from Mount Zion and Jerusalem.

God looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes: means God looked for His people to produce fruits fit for His name (i.e., faithfulness, love, compassion, kindness, mercy, honourable lifestyles, honest justice, helping the poor and helpless and such like things), but instead found worship of pagan gods, legalistic rule, wickedness, perverted justice, oppression of the poor and instead of helping them they were taking advantage of them for their own gain etc.).

Israel and Judah are likened to a vineyard planted in a fertile garden that the LORD the Master Gardener loved and planted and was looking forward to watching it grow and produce healthy and tasty fruit as every gardener does, but

instead of good fruit it produced rotten and uneatable fruit therefore as every earthly gardener tears out all the weeds and rotten crops in his garden the LORD is going to do likewise.

Jerusalem and Judah; judge Between Me and My Vineyard.

Isaiah 5:3 ----- ³And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

The LORD through the prophet Isaiah is calling the faithful amongst the house of Israel to choose whether they will follow Him or follow their corrupt leaders and priests much like Moses called the people to choose between life and death in the following verses: -

- I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." (Deut. 30:19-20).

And like Joshua called the people prior to crossing the River Jordan to: -

- Choose who they will serve, whether the gods their fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land they dwelt. (Joshua 24:15).

Isaiah is now calling Israel to choose between him and their false prophets and priest and between their pagan gods and the Lord their God who they will follow. Sadly the people made the wrong choice.

My Vineyard will be Trampled Down I will make it a Waste.

Isaiah 5:4-7 ----- ⁴What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? ⁵And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. ⁶I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. ⁷For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

Here the LORD is pictured as a caring father who has done everything He could for His children, but instead of joy He is mourning over them as an earthly father mourns over His children who have gone astray. God is mourning over them for the following two reasons: -

1. Like every caring father God wanted the best for His children.
2. Like all responsible parents God has to punish and discipline His children in such a manner that they will turn from their wicked ways and do what is right and good.

I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured: (v5) means God will remove his hand of protection from His people, instead of favour there will be judgment. The LORD uses secular nations, kings and people to achieve His plans and purposes, sometimes to bless and at other times to bring judgment. This is a time of judgment.

The LORD sent faithful prophet after prophet telling the people to surrender themselves to the King of Babylon and God would nurture them while in Babylonian captivity and deliver them.

Rather than heed the warnings of the prophets they not only set their hearts diamond hard against them (Zech. 7:12) and continued to rebel against the word of the LORD, but also continued worshipping other gods and in their gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to trample them down and lay them waste.

It shall not be pruned and briars and thorns shall grow up: (v6) Babylon took the people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem into captivity for seventy years during that time there was no one to cultivate their farmland so they not only became overrun with weeds, thorns and thistles, but wild animals also made their homes there.

God looked for justice and righteousness, but instead found bloodshed: (v7) two of the pillars of God's throne are justice and righteousness, when these pillars are replaced with dishonesty, perverted justice and crimes of murder God is forced to judge His people accordingly. A lesson to learn from this chapter is that everyone brings judgment upon themselves by their own wrongful actions and behaviour. God's people by their own corrupt behaviour brought the following six woes upon themselves: -

1st woe

Woe to those who join House to House and who add Field to Field.

Isaiah 5:8-10 ----- ⁸Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. ⁹The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing: "Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. ¹⁰For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah."

The statement, "Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field," does not mean that it is wrong to do these things. The idea is that only those who are abundantly rich can afford to buy up individual plots of land and join them together.

In contrast to this those who live in houses joined together cannot afford a house with land. Isaiah is saying that God's judgment is going to fall on the poor and the rich alike neither will escape it.

Bath: comes from the Hebrew word (*bath*) it refers to a Hebrew measure of about 22 litres (or 6 gallons). It means a division of liquids and figuratively carries the idea of breaking in pieces and laying desolate.

Homer: comes from the Hebrew word (*chomer*) it refers to a liquid or dry measure of about 220 litres or 60 gallons. It literally means a bubbling and boiling up of water or of a heap of earth, mire or clay.

Ephah: comes from the Hebrew word (*'eyphah*) it refers to a dry measure about 22 litres or 60 gallons. It literally means a measure for grain, but can refer to a measure in general. T

These measurements mean that no matter how much seed is planted the land will not grow, this is because the LORD has commanded the clouds not to rain upon the land (v6) and therefore it is suffering extreme drought. It was during this drought that Babylon invaded the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem.

2nd woe

Woe to those who are Prideful, Arrogant and Love Drinking Strong Wine.

Isaiah 5:11-17 ----- ¹¹Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! ¹²They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands. ¹³Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honoured men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst. ¹⁴Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down, her revelers and he who exults in her. ¹⁵Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are brought low. ¹⁶But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness. ¹⁷Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.

Woe to those who run after strong drink: (v11) not only are these people drinking most of the day, but they are also turning the feast of the LORD into a time of wild revelling and partying and instead of celebrating God in an honourably and worthy manner are using these feasts as a time to gratify their base lusts and pleasures. They make light of drunkenness and live as though God will not punish sin.

They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute: (v12) the use of music is not wrong, but when it is used with excess alcohol and draws people into immorality and away from God and what is right before Him then it becomes sin.

My people go into exile: (v13) refers to their seventy years in captivity to Babylon and the words, "For lack of knowledge," refer to their lack of knowledge concerning God's rules, statutes and laws and not doing them.

Sheol has enlarged its appetite: (v14) the grave is personified as a hungry creature with a large mouth that is about to be feeding on a multitude of dead bodies. These corpses are the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that will be slaughtered during the invasion of Babylon's fierce armies.

The Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness: (v16) because He is not partial to anyone when it comes to justice, if people do wrong they will be Judged accordingly whether they are His people or not.

Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture: (v17) this they did after the seventy year captivity when Israel returned to their land rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple of God a golden age of peace followed farmers cultivated their land and livestock multiplied.

3rd woe

Woe to those who Speak Falshoods, Love Sin, Iniquity and Wrongdoing.

Isaiah 5:18-19 ----- 18Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes,
19who say: "Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!"

The nation of Israel is pictured here as a cart that is so heavy laden with wickedness, corruption, lies, deceit and all kinds of sin that the only way to move the cart is to pull it with ropes as an ox pulls a wagon. It is a graphic picture that highlights how extremely blind the nation has become to the heavy burden of sin and the consequences it has on them individually and upon them as a nation.

Let the Holy One of Israel make speed, and hasten his counsel: (v19) the word counsel in this context refers to God's threatened purpose to punish the nation. These are words of mockery that highlight how far the people have fallen in their wickedness. They did not believe God would do them harm and therefore set their hearts diamond hard against the warnings of the prophets concerning God's impending judgments.

They were speaking from an attitude of insolence, defiance, mockery and scorn when they said to Isaiah "Let the Holy one of Israel speedily bring this punishment that you speak of upon us," because they did not believe that God would punish or do what the prophets had spoken. It is an expression of defiance.

Let him make speed and hasten his work: these words of ancient Israel reflect the following words of scorn and mockery of the Jews concerning Christ: -

- He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. (Matt. 27:42).

And the following people the apostle Peter spoke of: -

- Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.
4They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4).

To not believe God's prophetic declarations and to mock them is the common language of sinners and was the language of the people of Judah when they said to Isaiah, "Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!" (v19).

4th woe

Woe to those who call Evil Good and Good Evil.

Isaiah 5:20 ----- 20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

Woe unto them that call evil good refers to those who: -

- Call false prophets good and reject true prophets (as Israel was doing with Isaiah and other faithful prophets God sent to them).
- Speak in praise of drunkenness, sinful pleasures and fleshly lusts, and treat the fear of God with contempt.
- Prefer distorted and twisted doctrines to those that are true. (Examples of this would be doctrines that promise prosperity, success and a life of ease and doctrines that appeal to self and pride and ego).
- Exalt and esteem pride and look down upon the humble and meek as being lessor.
- Call serious godliness and faithfulness, childish foolishness.
- Say that those who live a charmed and prosperous life are favoured by God and that those who are poor and suffering sickness are not.
- Teach that strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions is the path to salvation and of more value to God than trusting in His grace.
- Say that the worship of idols that are seen is more important than worshipping the invisible immortal Almighty God of Israel who is not seen.

The religious leaders of Jesus generations (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) are a good example of those who called evil good. They called their ceremonial rites and legalistic traditions holy just and good while at the same time rejected the glorious Gospel of Christ and his teaching and plotted his murder.

Though the expression, "Woe to them that call evil good," refers to all of these things mentioned it is not limited to them only, but embraces every action, teaching and aspect of behaviour that is wrong and presenting (or believing) it is right.

- He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD. (Prov. 17:15).

Those who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter: (v20) carries the same idea as calling evil good. Bitter and bitterness are often used to denote sin as the following verses show: -

- Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. ¹⁸But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol. (Prov. 9:17-18).
- Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you (Jeremiah 2:19).
- I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. (Acts 8:23).
- The mouth of the unrighteous is full of curses and bitterness. (Rom. 3:14).

- Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Ephes. 4:31).
- See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; (Heb. 12:15).

The meaning of the expression, "Those who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter," does not differ from the meaning expressed in the words, "Those who call evil good," except that there is implied the additional idea that sin is bitter and doing what is right is sweet meaning one ends with painful consequences while the other brings reward.

5th woe

Woe to those who are Shrewd in their own Sight.

Isaiah 5:21 ----- ²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

Those who are wise in their own eyes refer to the following two groups: -

1. Those who trust in their own reasoning and wisdom rather than the word of God
2. Those who trust in their own righteousness, self-effort and good works to be counted worthy before God for salvation and eternal life rather than trust in Christ's righteousness and God's grace.

Those who are shrewd in their own sight: refers to those who cunningly use deceit and lies to advance their own ambitions and goals and to religious ministers and teachers who to increase their power or fame or for the purpose of advancing their own religious empire twist and distort Scriptures in such a manner that they appeal to self, ego and pride.

6th woe

Woe to those who Take Bribes and Deprive the Innocent of their Right.

Isaiah 5:22-23 ----- ²²Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine (mighty to drink wine in KJV), and valiant men (men of strength in KJV) in mixing strong drink, ²³who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right! (Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! in the KJV).

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink (strong drink) these words are similar to those in (v11-12), but there the revellers were simply common men of the careless self-indulgent type, while here they are identified with heroes, mighty and valiant men which may refer to either of the following three groups: -

1. Ruthless soldiers who would not only drink much strong wine and boast of their victories and battles, but also take by force what rightfully belong to the righteous and the innocent for the price of a bribe, similar to modern day mercenaries who kill for financial reward.
2. Those who were rich since they could afford the spices and herbs, the dates and drugs, etc., to mix with the wine to make it more intoxicating.
3. Judges and those who were in positions of authority and power since it is linked to corrupt rulers who take bribes (i.e., rewards). Such men were in positions that enabled them to cheat the innocent and the righteous out of what was rightfully theirs (i.e., their land, homes, property or inheritance) by perverting justice and distorting laws. To pervert justice and cheat the innocent out of what was rightfully theirs is an abomination before the LORD.

They Have Rejected the Law of the LORD and Despised His Word.

Isaiah 5:24-25 ----- ²⁴Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. ²⁵Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched

out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

Therefore links the following verse back to all that has been said so far. The LORD is saying because His people continue to worship pagan gods, pervert justice for financial gain, oppress the poor, mock God's prophets, scorn the word of the LORD turn God's holy feasts into a time of drunken revelling are full of wickedness, corruption, lies, deceit and all kinds of sin and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel they will be devoured by fire and go down to the dust (i.e., killed in battle) and their corpses will lay as rubbish on the streets of Jerusalem.

Their Roaring is Like a Lion they Seize their Prey and None can Rescue.

Isaiah 5:26-30 ----- ²⁶He will raise a signal for nations afar off, and whistle for them from the ends of the earth; and behold, quickly, speedily they come! ²⁷None is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps, not a waistband is loose, not a sandal strap broken; ²⁸their arrows are sharp, all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs seem like flint, and their wheels like the whirlwind. ²⁹Their roaring is like a lion, like young lions they roar; they growl and seize their prey; they carry it off, and none can rescue. ³⁰They will growl over it on that day, like the growling of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress; and the light is darkened by its clouds.

These verses are a very colourful and graphic picture of a fearful and well organised mighty and powerful army of horses, chariots and thousands of fearsome warriors marching over the land of Judah and into the city of Jerusalem. It is the armies of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon who God used as his servant to bring His judgment upon the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that Isaiah prophesied would come upon them if they did not repent and turn from their rebellion and wickedness.

Following is a brief overview of the History of Israel around the time of Isaiah.

God sent prophet after prophet to warn Judah and Israel of impending doom if they did not change their wicked ways, but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets (Zech. 7:12). The LORD through the faithful prophets told them to surrender themselves to the King of Babylon and God would nurture them while in Babylonian captivity and deliver them. But they continued to rebel against the word of the LORD and turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The curses of the covenant are found in (Deut. 28:15-68) and the blessing of the covenant in (Deuteronomy. 28:1-14).

The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.). Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to the Empire of Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. They were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years.

Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed

shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed.

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

End.