

CHAPTER FIVE

C. THE IMPRECATION OF ABANDONMENT 5:1-30

1. THE WORDS OF ACCUSATION

TEXT: 5:1-7

- 1 Let me sing for my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:
- 2 and he digged it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.
- 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.
- 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?
- 5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:
- 6 and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
- 7 For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry.

QUERIES

- a. Did Isaiah actually put this in the form of a song?
- b. What are the "wild grapes" brought forth?

c. Why use the figure of a "vineyard"?

PARAPHRASE

Now I shall sing indeed of my Beloved a song of my Beloved about His vineyard. My Beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He plowed it carefully and took out all the rocks and planted His vineyard with the choicest vines. He built a sturdy watchtower in the middle of it to aid in its protection and cut a permanent wine-press out of the solid rock. Then He patiently waited anticipating a bountiful harvest of sweet grapes. But the grapes that grew were wild and putrid. Now, men of Jerusalem and Judah, you have heard the case! You be the judges! What more could I have done? Why did My vineyard give Me wild grapes instead of sweet? Now I would indeed have you to know what I am about to do to My vineyard; I shall remove the fence of hedge and the vineyard shall be consumed by predators and I shall break down its wall of stone and it shall be trampled down by wild beasts. I will not prune it or cultivate it any more. Briers and thorns will grow up and strangle the vines; I will command the clouds not to rain on it any more. I have been giving you the case of God's chosen people. They are the vineyard I have been speaking about. Israel and Judah were His pleasant plantings. He expected justice, but they produced bloodshed instead. He expected righteousness, but the cries of deep oppression came to Him.

COMMENTS

v. 1 POSSESSOR OF THE VINEYARD: The vineyard belongs to The Beloved, God. Even the song about the vineyard is *of* the Beloved—that is, originates with the Beloved. The prophet sings the song on behalf of the Beloved. This seems to be a song composed rather like some of our contemporary folk-songs—by on-the-spot improvisation. Whether sung to the accompaniment of

an instrument or not is immaterial. This song was intended for teaching, not entertainment! The vineyard was a favorite subject for parabolic instruction, both in the O.T. and the N.T. (Cf. *Psa.* 80:8ff; *Hosea* 10:1; *Jer.* 2:21; *Ezek.* 15:6; 17:1ff; 19:10ff; *Matt.* 20:1-16; 21:33-43; *Jn.* 15:1-11).

v. 2 PROVISION FOR THE VINEYARD: It is God's vineyard by absolute right. He planted it upon land which was His. He planted it in a very productive, conspicuous place in the midst of civilization (on a fertile hill); He cleared it of all hindrances of foreigners (gathered out the stones); He built protective fortresses within it (watchtower); He made provisions to use the fruits of the nation (built a winepress). Then with Divine patience and long-suffering He cultivated this nation with great blessings of deliverance and chastening. He sent His servants the leaders and prophets to tend it. He had every right to anticipate an abundant harvest of sweetness; instead it produced wildness, putridness and rotteness.

v. 3-4 PETITION AGAINST THE VINEYARD: It is the very essence of the righteous dealings of God with man that such dealings, when perverted, bring inevitable self-condemnation upon the perverters. Here, the guilty are petitioned to make a judgment as to where justice lies between the Owner and His vineyard. It reminds one of Jesus asking the Jews to make such judgments upon themselves (Cf. *Matt.* 21:28-32; 21:33-43, etc.). There comes a point in God's dealing with man beyond which God can do no more to produce good fruit in man's life. There is a point where God is forced, by the very nature of the moral being of man, to give up. Man, left to his own devices, falls into complete ruin.

v. 5-6 PUNISHMENT OF THE VINEYARD: Really all that God has to do is withdraw Divine protection and sustenance and leave men to their own selfish, evil devices, and that would be punishment enough (Cf. *Romans* 1:18-32). When God withdrew His protection from Judah, the "wild bull" of Assyria (*Isa.* 10:13) and the "lion, bear, leopard and iron beast" of the book of Daniel all trampled the "vineyard" down. When God withdrew His sustenance from Judah, she suffered famine and hunger

(both spiritual and physical) in her captivities. Often times the prophets use rain to symbolize the refreshing presence of the Spirit of God. Ezekiel represents the Spirit of God leaving the temple of God in Jerusalem near the end of the national existence of Judah (Cf. Ezek. 11:23).

V. 7 PRONOUNCEMENT OF THE VINEYARD'S IDENTITY: If the audience of the prophet has not already surmised who was being evaluated, the prophet would not leave it to doubt. The vineyard is Judah—God's covenant people (Israel does not here necessarily refer to the northern kingdom, but is synonymous with covenant-people). This is like Nathan's statement to David, "thou art the man!" God looked for His people, with all their advantages of having His word and being sustained by His power and seeing His love, mercy, justice and goodness exhibited, to produce the same kind of character—justice and righteousness. Having all this and appropriating it are two different things! This people appropriated the nature of the pagan gods they were so enamored of (Cf. Hosea 9:10). Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also!

QUIZ

1. What kind of song was sung by the prophet?
2. Why use the figure of a vineyard?
3. Why did God have a right to expect the vineyard to produce a certain kind of harvest?
4. Why does God not do more to bring about the right kind of fruit in this vineyard?
5. How is God going to punish this vineyard?
6. Who will the beasts likely be that will trample down the vineyard?
7. What kind of character did the covenant people produce?

2. THE WOES OF APPLICATION

TEXT: 5:8-23

- 8 Woe 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!
- 9 In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.
- 10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.
- 11 Woe 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!
- 12 And 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.
- 13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst.
- 14 Therefore 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.
- 15 And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are humbled:
- 16 but Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness.
- 17 Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall wanderers eat.
- 18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope;
- 19 that 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!
- 20 Woe 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!

- 21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!
- 22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink;
- 23 that justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

QUERIES

- a. What is wrong with acquiring houses and fields?
- b. What is "drawing iniquity with cords of falsehood"?
- c. Who would call "evil good, and good evil"?

PARAPHRASE

Woe to you who acquire property so others have no place to live. Your homes are built on great estates so you can be alone in the midst of great expanses of land! But the Lord of Hosts has sworn your awful fate—with my own ears I heard Him say, Many a beautiful home will lie deserted, their owners killed or gone. Ten acres of vineyard will produce less than ten gallons of wine, and ten bushels of seed will produce less than one bushel of grain. Woe to you who get up very early in the morning to debauch and debase yourselves with endless carousing and drinking of strong drink. Your addiction is insatiable and you drink yourselves into a stupor. By the riotous merriment of your festivities accompanied by the loud, pagan music, you have very effectively turned your attention away from the work of the Lord and have made yourself insensible to His ways. Sin has so darkened your spiritual understanding you are as good as banished from the Lord's presence into captivity—there is no alternative left to Him but to punish the leaders and the people of this nation with the consequences of their rebellions. There will be both spiritual and physical starvation. Death and the grave are waiting with

mouths wide open to devour the multitudes that will die. Those who revel in injustice, drunkenness, and pompousness will be swallowed up in God's punishment. In that day the haughty shall be brought down to the dust; the proud shall be humbled; and the Lord of Hosts will be exalted above all, for He alone is holy, just and good. The devastation of what was once the vineyard of the Lord will be so complete as to turn the glorious land into pastures for wandering flocks of sheep and goats. Woe to those who are so enslaved to their sins that they drag them along with them everywhere they go like dumb oxen pulling carts. The ropes which bind them to their sins are the lying vanities with which they have deceived themselves. They are so brazen as to mock the Holy One of Israel and dare the Lord to punish them. Hurry up and punish us, O Lord, they say, We want to see what You can do! Woe to them that turn all values upside down and say that what is right is wrong and what is wrong is right; that black is white and white is black; bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter. Woe to those who are wise and shrewd in their own estimation! Woe to those who are heroes when it comes to getting drunk, and boast about the wine they can hold. Woe to those who pervert justice by taking bribes, letting the guilty go free and putting innocent men in prison.

COMMENTS

After the general warning conveyed to Judah by the song or parable of the vineyard, six sins are pointed out as those which have especially provoked God to give the warning. He now pronounces woes of application against each of these sins.

v. 8-10 **WOE AGAINST MONOPOLY AND GREED:** Selfishness - greed for possession of land and houses. Many rich people are notorious for this sin. They are not satisfied to own a small business, however well paying; they must monopolize. It gives them a sense of security and power. God never intended for a few to control the wealth of the world. These men of Isaiah's day were "land-grabbers" to the extent that there was no room left

for the poor man who must either live on the property of the land-owners as slaves or immigrate to another territory. This violated the Mosaic law which had apportioned a parcel of land to each family head. This land was to remain in the family. If it should have to be sold, it was to be returned to the original family in the year of Jubilee. God's judgment is spoken directly into the ear of Isaiah. There can be no mistake—God will judge! Desolate houses; barren and unfruitful land. Ten acres of vineyard normally should produce 4,000 gallons of wine instead of 8 gallons. The land would produce but 1/10th the seed sown.

v. 11-17 WOE AGAINST DISSIPATION: Misuse of God's beneficence. They rise early, not to work and live constructively, but to revel and play in riotous music, feasting and dancing. A greedy, grasping, monopolizing people. Luxury loving, drinking, feasting and reveling. Consuming the land—while the rest of the people lived like slaves. The only liberty they care for is a selfish liberty—license to do as they please. There is no room in their drink-weakened, pleasure-loving brains for serious thought of sober government. Their only thought is how to enjoy this moment, this day; and they squeeze every day dry and fling it to one side after it is finished.

Captivity is the inevitable consequence of such dissipation. Moral, intellectual, political and spiritual enslavement surely follows such decadence. Loss of personal worth, personal identity and death await such actions. In this instance, the people, their wealth, and their haughtiness will come to an end. Both high and low will meet the same end—captivity.

The lambs and sheep of foreigners will feed in their land. The places formerly owned by the wealthy shall be occupied and used by strangers. Assyrians, Arabs, Samaritans and other nomadic tribes inhabited this land during their captivities.

v. 18-19 WOE AGAINST UNBELIEF: Not having faith in God they sin openly as those who draw or pull after them a load of sin with cords or ropes. They are so enslaved to their sins and to Satan, they are like harnessed oxen who pull heavy burdens; the difference being men voluntarily wish it to be so while animals have no choice. And we call animals, "dumb"! And far from

being penitent, they are brazen. When told of God's coming judgment, instead of fleeing to hide in the rocks, they scoff, "What is God waiting for—tell Him to come on. We would like to see Him come in judgment!" The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Absence of the fear of the Lord leads to stupidity (Cf. II Tim. chapters 3 and 4).

V. 20 **WOE AGAINST MORAL CONFUSION:** Moral confusion always results from unbelief (Cf. Rom. 1:18-32). Where there is no faith in God there are no clear-cut moral distinctions—no clear conception of what is right and wrong. There can only be moral relativism—a thing is right because we want it to be—moral anarchy. Dostoevski has his priest character say, in *The Brothers Karamasov*, "If there is no God everything is permissible." Nietzsche, the insane German philosopher, insisted that what the world needed was a "transvaluation of values." Nietzsche was simply carrying out his evolutionary atheism to its rational end. When unbelief takes over, all values are turned upside-down. What is good is said to be bad; what is bad is said to be good. The playboyism of our 20th century attempts to convince people that Christian ethics (especially in sex) are evil. Where this reversal of values occurs, cowardice becomes caution; recklessness becomes courage; stinginess becomes thrift; prodigality becomes generosity; sin becomes maladjustment! Right or wrong becomes a matter of custom. Cursing, drinking, promiscuous sexual activity, gambling are all justified on pragmatic bases. There appear as many ethical standards as there are individuals. People make up their own laws to suit their own purposes. Recognition of authority, except for oneself, disappears. Society soon resembles a chicken with its head cut off—no coordination, no purpose, no control. Moral anarchy results in civil and social destruction and death.

V. 21 **WOE AGAINST CONCEIT:** Not only do they sin blatantly—they take pride in their adeptness in sinning. They are wise in their own eyes. The farther men drift from God in unbelief the more conceited they become (Cf. Rom. 1:18-32; II Pet. 3:3-7; II Cor. 10:7-12). God becomes something to set on a table as a kind of ornament. Religion becomes a fetish, having no real place,

no real function in life. The real issues and problems of society are made relative to selfish interests. Pride is the snare of the devil. Pride brought the judgment of God upon angels.

v. 22-23 **WOE AGAINST PERVERSION OF JUSTICE:** Selfishness is the first step into degradation. Selfishness means dethronement of God. As a result of such dethronement men turn to false securities—false gods. Wine, sex, money all are sought as replacements for God. The leaders of Judah become sots—alcoholics. Drunkards administered the government! In America we have drunken legislators, drunken government executives, and drunken military leaders administering our government! Drunkenness, graft, bribery, injustice, corruption of all kinds were rampant in Judah at this time. The justification for such action was cynical unbelief. One important issue of such living is moral anarchy. The inevitable consequence of such a society is arrogant rulers and an oppressed populace. The leaders of the country boasted and prided themselves, not in how well they ruled, but in how well they mixed drinks and how drunken they were able to become.

QUIZ

1. Name the sins for which the rulers are judged guilty in this section.
2. Show how unbelief leads to social, political and intellectual enslavement.
3. When have such sins been prevalent in men other than in Isaiah's day?

3. THE WRATH OF JUDGMENT

TEXT: 5:24-30

24 Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be

as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

- 25 Therefore is the anger of Jehovah kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them; and the mountains tremble, and their dead bodies are as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.
- 26 And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly;
- 27 none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:
- 28 whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent: their horses' hoofs shall be accounted as flint, and their wheels as a whirlwind;
- 29 their roaring shall be like a lioness, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver.
- 30 And they shall roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold, darkness and distress; and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof.

QUERIES

- a. Why is God's anger so fierce?
- b. What is the "ensign to the nations" in v. 26?
- c. How successful will be God's punishment?

PARAPHRASE

Therefore God will deal with them and burn them. They will disappear like straw on fire. Their roots will rot and their flowers wither, for they have thrown away the laws of God and despised

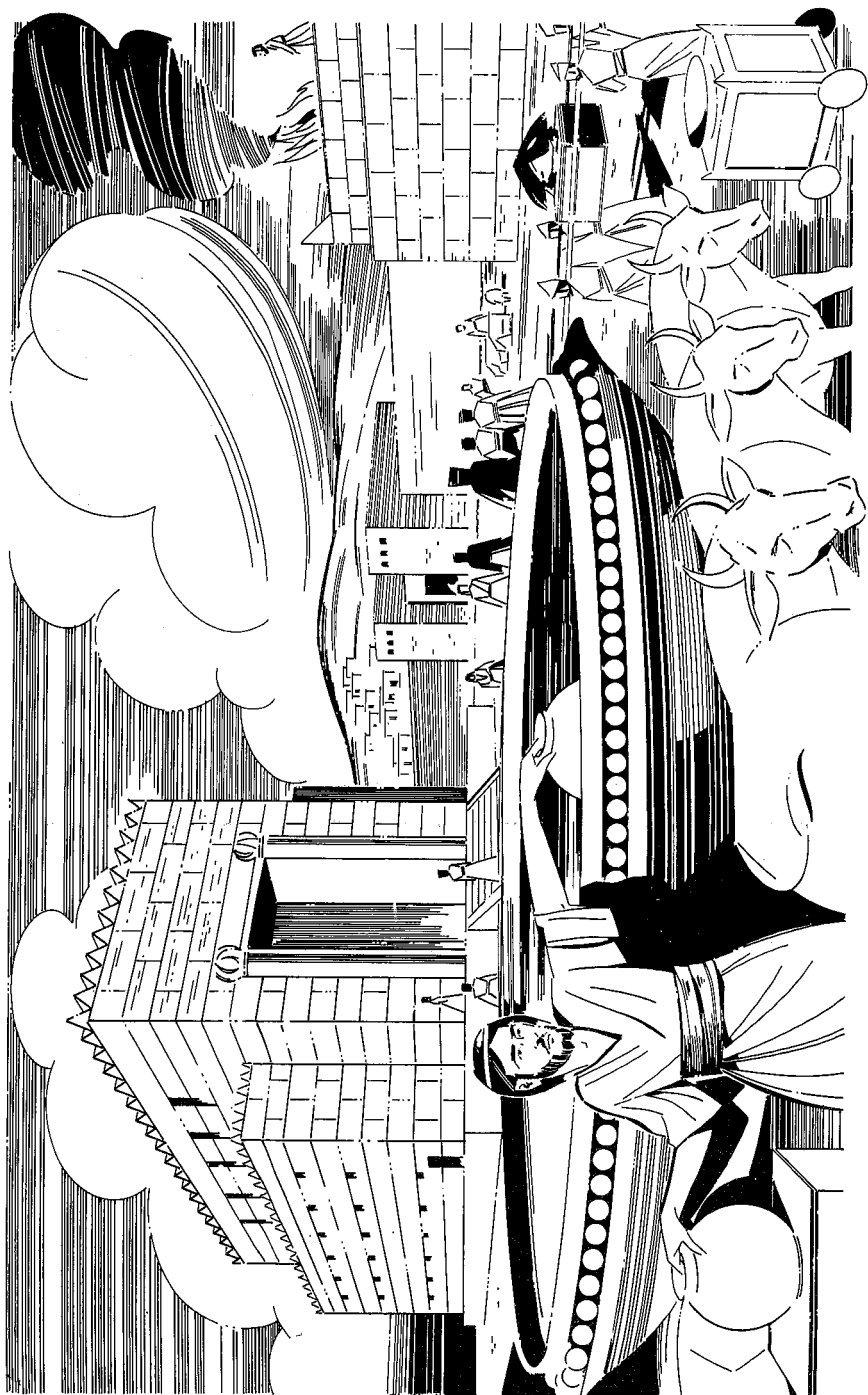
the Word of the Holy One of Israel. That is why the anger of the Lord is hot against His people; that is why He has reached out His hand to smash them. The hills will tremble, and the rotting bodies of His people will be thrown as refuse in the streets. But even so, His anger is not ended; His hand is heavy on them still. He will send a signal to the nations far away, whistling to those at the ends of the earth, and they will come racing toward Jerusalem. They never weary, never stumble, never stop; their belts are tight, their bootstraps strong; they run without stopping for rest or for sleep. Their arrows are sharp; their bows are bent; sparks fly from their horses' hoofs, and the wheels of their chariots spin like the wind. They roar like lions and pounce upon the prey. They seize My people and carry them off into captivity with none to rescue them. They growl over the victims like the roaring of the sea. Over all Israel lies a pall of darkness and sorrow and the heavens are black.

COMMENTS

v. 24-25 THE ANGER OF GOD: The people are to be smitten. What happens to them will be in proportions of earthquake "shaking mightily the earth." Great numbers to be slain. His anger still unappeased. This judgment does not end in a single day or week or even a month. The fundamental cause for all their sin is the rejection of God's law (Cf. Jer. 6:19; 8:9; Isa. 30:9, 12). They not only reject His law, they *despise* it. (Hosea 4:6).

v. 26-28 THE ANGER STRIKES: The scourge comes. God is perfectly equipped. This scourging instrument is the invading armies of Assyria, composed of a conglomeration of peoples. God gives the signal - "Lift up an ensign" (a signal of some sort) He will hiss (whistle). These armies did not come except through His will and purpose. Strong - trained - efficiently accoutered. God sends His signal (stirs up the spirit of nations and rulers) and they serve Him (Cf. Obad. 1; II Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1; Isa. 44:28; 45:1; 10:5ff).

v. 29 GOD IS TERRIBLY FIERCE: Unwearied - courageous -

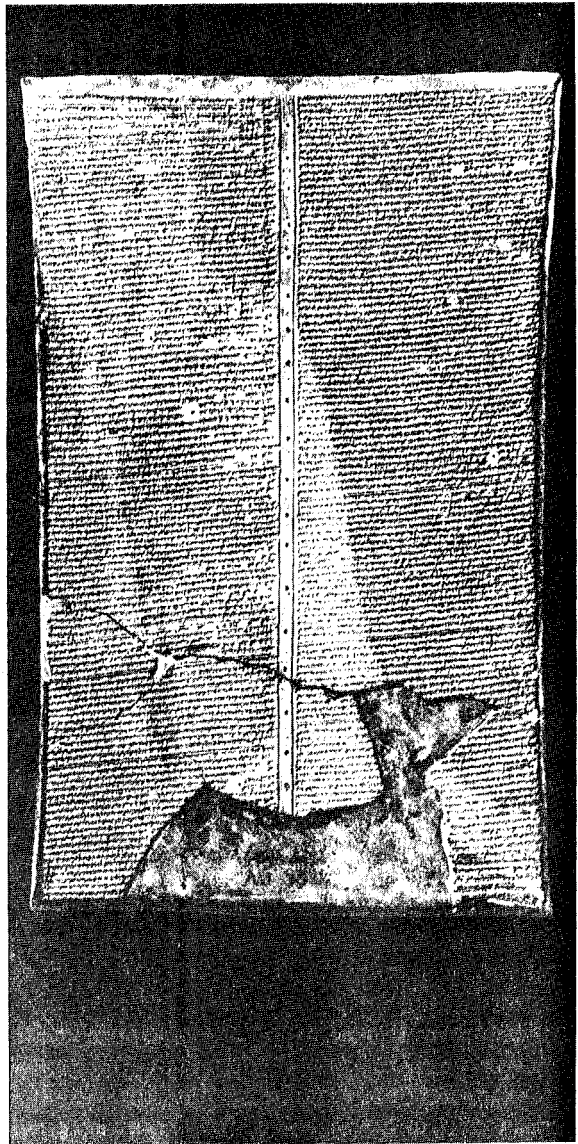


"Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria . . ."

(II Kings 17:5-6).

"I besieged and captured Samaria, and carried off 27,290 of its inhabitants as booty."

The Assyrian text of this victory inscription of Sargon II dealing with his campaign in Israel, which is preserved in the original, reads like a confirmation of the biblical statement.



powerful - ferocious - cruel - bloodthirsty and terrifying - swift.

v. 30 GOD IS COMPLETELY OR OVERWHELMINGLY SUCCESSFUL: As a lioness overwhelms her prey and carries it away. The land is utterly desolated. And if Israel from Assyrian captivity looks toward the home land they will see only the darkness of a cloudy and obscure future. A future and a land darkened by divine judgement.

CHAPTER SIX

D. ILLUMINATION FROM THE ALMIGHTY 6:1-13

1. THE PROPHET SEES GOD 6:1-7

a. THE GLORY

TEXT: 6:1-4

- 1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.
- 2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
- 3 And one cried into another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.
- 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

QUERIES

- a. Why mention that Uzziah had died?
- b. Who are the "seraphim"?
- c. What does the shaking of the thresholds symbolize?