

I.—DEPARTMENT OF O. T. EXEGESIS.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH.

III.

CHAPTER V. contains the third prophecy. The first prophecy, Chapter I., was mainly introductory,—its themes being sin, suffering, call to repentance, and promise on condition of reformation. The second prophecy, Chapters ii.—iv., shows that as Jerusalem was guilty it must suffer, but a remnant would be saved and purified,—blessing should arise through judgment. This prophecy is complete, ending in the strain in which it began. Chapter v. may therefore be regarded as a separate prophecy. It naturally falls into three divisions:—

1. The parable of the vineyard (vv. 1-7). God had planted a vineyard and watched over it with great care; he expected good fruit, but he had been bitterly disappointed, for wild grapes was the only product. He could have done no more for it than he had done. He would therefore throw down the hedges and give it over to spoliation. This was a graphic picture of God's goodness and of Israel's vile ingratitude. The past had been strewn with mercies, but rebellion had been the result. God was now about to arise and vindicate his holiness. The threatening here looks beyond any immediate disaster, and points forward to the destruction of the city and the captivity of the people.

The first prophecy commenced with an appeal to the heavens and the earth, reminding us of the words with which the song of Moses is introduced (Deut. xxxii. 2). Isaiah says he will sing a song concerning his beloved,—that is, the Lord,—a song concerning his vineyard. The idea of Israel as God's vineyard is supposed to have originated with Isaiah. It is found in the Psalms, in Ezekiel, and in the Gospels. This parable is very like some of those delivered by our Lord on similar occasions.