



Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 22

*Theme: Review of
Jerusalem's abominations*

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Missler Introduction: Worship practices in the early cultures of Chaldea, Syria, and Egypt had some very raunchy X-rated stuff. We are not going to go into detail, but will cover this in broad terms.

In the vindication of God's judgment back in Chapter 20, we were taken on a survey of the iniquities of the Nation Israel. That was somewhat in an historical sense, and was focusing on perhaps the abominations of the ancestors of the people Ezekiel was here talking to directly. In Chapter 22 he will zero in on their current indictment.

There are some lessons here that we probably need to digest. As we get into this chapter, let us try to understand Ezekiel's message to his people, and also recognize that God put it there for our learning also, and I do not mean just in the historical sense.¹

This chapter contains a recital of the sins of Jerusalem, vv. 1-12; for which God threatens it with severe judgments, vv. 13-16, in order to purify it from the dross, vv. 17-22. And as the corruption is general, pervading prophets, priests, princes, and people; so, it is declared, shall be the punishment, vv. 23-31.

Ezekiel 22 explains why Jerusalem's judgment would come (Ezekiel 22:2-16), how it would come (Ezekiel 22:17-22), and who would be judged by it (Ezekiel 22:23-31).

This oracle focuses on the sins of Jerusalem, making the point that her iniquity has hastened her end. The list of misdoings ranges from the social to the sacral: bloodshed (3, 9), idolatry (3, 4), misuse of power (6), ill-treatment of various social groups (7), desecration of Sabbaths (8), paganism (9), sexual misconduct and incest (10-11), bribery and extortion (12), and simply ignoring God (12). The punishment due would involve the dispersal of the people throughout the lands.²

McGee Introduction: We continue in this section which contains the last prophecies concerning the judgment that was coming upon the nation Israel (chs. 20-24). In the beginning, Ezekiel's messages were directed to the first two delegations which had gone into captivity. They were holding on to the belief that God would never destroy the temple; it was His sanctuary, and His glory had been there.

They believed that God would not allow Nebuchadnezzar to touch it. The false prophets encouraged the captives in their unbelief, making them think it was not necessary for them to come back to God, or to give up their idolatry and other evil ways.

There is something very subtle that happens often in our day which I think we need to be very careful about. A great many men are eulogized today even before they die, but particularly at their funerals; though they were godless blasphemers, some preacher tries to push them right into heaven with his words of praise. Unless we have God's mind on the matter, we need to be very careful what we say about folk. Otherwise, an unbeliever may measure his goodness by the life of someone who is praised (he knows how great a

¹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

² Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition* (4th ed.) (Eze 22:1-16). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

sinner that man was!), and may be led to believe that he does not need the Savior. It is tragic today that gospel messages are frequently given to a crowd of saints, but not given at a time and place the worldly and unsaved man is present. Too often, the preacher trims his message to please the crowd—that is what the false prophets of Ezekiel’s day did.

Ezekiel has really been laying it on the line in these final prophecies. In chapter 20 he gave a prophecy concerning the Negeb, the southern part of Israel around Beersheba. In that prophecy God said, “I’ll kindle a fire in thee.” I have been through that area, and it is as baldheaded as a doorknob; there is no vegetation of any size whatsoever. I never saw a tree any larger than my arm in the entire place. There used to be a forest there, but God judged it, and He did a pretty good job of it. Then in chapter 21, there was the remarkable prophecy that there would be no one to sit on David’s throne until the Lord Jesus came. That is what the angel was talking about when he said to Mary, “I am going to give to Him the throne of His father David.” You see, even at Christmastime it’s nice to have Ezekiel around to add to our understanding. The background the prophets give us is so needful today.³

ESV Introduction: Again, introductory and concluding formulas mark out the bounds of three distinct but thematically related oracles. Each convicts Jerusalem of practicing vile impurities that God refuses to tolerate. The first, and longest, characterizes this behavior in detail (vv. 1–16); the second uses the metaphor of melting for ridding Jerusalem of its impurities (vv. 17–22); the third surveys the city’s inhabitants; but none provides a reason for preventing its destruction (vv. 23–31).

Now, why would God do this? Chapter 22 he now tells us the things that were happening and the sins for which God’s judgment was coming.

The cause of judgment (22:1-16). Chapter 22 lists the abominations of the city of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 22:1

Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Wycliffe: Catalogue of Jerusalem’s Defiling Crimes. 22:1-12.

Four main groups of abominable deeds are treated in this first oracle. (1) Idolatry and irreligion. Forgetfulness of the Lord (v. 12) is at the root of all the sins (23:35). Idols (vv. 3, 4), despising of holy things, profaning the sabbaths (v. 8; cf. v. 26; 20:20, 21), and eating idol sacrifices upon the mountains (v. 9; cf. 18:6) are denounced. (2) Widespread bloodshed occurred throughout the city (see vv. 2-4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 27). (3) Immorality and incest were common. Men commit(ted) lewdness (v. 9b; cf. 16:27; Lev 18:17), marrying a stepmother (v. 10; cf. Lev 18:7, 8; 20:11ff.). They humbled women who were unclean in their impurity (v. 10b, RSV; cf. 18:6; Lev 18:9). They committed adultery with a neighbor’s wife, and incest with a daughter in law and with a sister (v. 11; cf. Lev 18:20,5, 9). (4) Inhumanity was practiced: father and mother are treated with contempt,

³ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 21:32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

the sojourner suffers extortion ... the fatherless and the widow are wronged (v. 7, RSV; cf. Ex 21:17; 22:21, 22). There was slander leading to bloodshed (v. 9; cf. Lev 19:16). Men took bribes, usury, and extortion (v. 12; cf. Ex 23:8; 22:25; Lev 19:13). The people did not keep the code of righteousness extolled in 18:5-9.⁴

Dake: Seven Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. I have made you a reproach to the heathen, and a mocking to all countries (soon to be fulfilled, Ezekiel 22:4).
2. Those that be near, and those that be far from you, will mock you (Ezekiel 22:5).
3. I will deal with you (Ezekiel 22:14).
4. I will scatter you among the heathen and disperse you in the countries (Ezekiel 22:15).
5. I will consume your filthiness out of you.
6. You will take your inheritance (or forfeit your inheritance) in the sight of the heathen (Ezekiel 22:16).
7. You will know that I am Jehovah.⁵

BKC 1-5: God asked Ezekiel, Will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? This is similar to the questions God asked him at the beginning of this section on Jerusalem's sin (cf. 20:4). If Ezekiel was to function as a prosecuting attorney or judge, he had to declare the facts of the case. He needed to confront Jerusalem with all her detestable practices.

Then God gave Ezekiel two charges to present against the city: shedding blood and making idols. Ezekiel mentioned blood or bloodshed seven times in this message to drive home the city's sin of extreme violence (cf. "violence" in 7:23; 8:17; 12:19). These two sins opposed the Mosaic Law's standards for Israel's relationships with God and her fellow Israelites (cf. Matt. 22:34-40). Rather than loving God she had turned to idolatry; and her love for her fellow Israelites had been replaced by treachery.

Jerusalem's sin would be punished—the end of her years had come. When she fell, her neighbors would mock her. The pride of this infamous city would turn to shame as she would be exposed in her sin before others.⁶

McGee 1-2: "The bloody city"—this is what Ezekiel calls Jerusalem. Isaiah said the same thing in Isaiah 1:21, "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." The Lord Jesus wept over the city and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ..." (Luke 13:34). After all, didn't they slay Him also? They turned Him over to the Romans who did the killing job. It was Stephen who said to the Jews, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). At the death of Christ, the crowd cried out to Pilate, "... His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25).

⁴ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 22:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁵ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁶ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:1-5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The leaders of Israel were involved in apostasy and gross sins:⁷

Nelson 1-5: These verses focus on the sins of Jerusalem, principally bloodshed (social sin) as a result of idolatry (spiritual sin). A problem in the vertical relationship with God inevitably leads to some degree of injustice and injury in horizontal, human affairs. You have caused your days to draw near: The city was ripe for judgment. When such hypocrisy is exposed and punishment is executed before the world, God's people become lasting objects of ridicule.⁸

ESV 1-16: The Bloody City. Issues of purity persist throughout the book, and come to the fore here. Although guilt is implicated, the issue is not primarily legal. The repetition of forms of the Hebrew *tame* ("impure, unclean")—translated defiled in vv. 3–5 (also v. 11)—points rather to ethical or ritual impurity, as also does the distinctive conjunction of blood and idols in vv. 3–4 (only, it seems, in Ezekiel; cf. 16:36; 36:18). The catalog of abominations in 22:6–12 bears comparison with the similar lists of virtues and vices in 18:5–18. They are not identical, however, and it has been pointed out that some of the offenses listed here depend on powerful officials (22:6–7, 9, 12) and a functioning temple (v. 8). In other words, the addressees are members of pre-586-b.c. Jerusalem, in distinction to the audience of exiles in ch. 18. The list has strong parallels in Leviticus (see the cross-references).

Chuck Smith 1-4: Because you have turned to idolatry and because the murders that are going on. And, of course, this was to their idols. They were sacrificing their own children as live sacrifices to these gods.⁹

1-2 Judge The City

God calls Jerusalem "the bloody city." Through the years, Jerusalem has been called "the holy city." But God does not see it as holy at this point. To be "holy" means to be set apart, to be consecrated or dedicated for God's use. But Jerusalem had not behaved as a holy city for a long time. Now, God saw her only as bloody.

Ezekiel is told by the Lord to bring Jerusalem to trial, to lay out for them the reasons that they are going to be judged. And so Ezekiel will spell out for the city her abominations.¹⁰

Ezekiel 22:2

Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations.

Before Ezekiel could pronounce judgment, he must inform his people of the charges against them. Again he was to "cause her to know all her abominations" (cf. 20:4).¹¹

⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 22:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ The Nelson Study Bible Notes

⁹ Chuck Smith, Notes on Ezekiel, Pastor / founder, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA

¹⁰ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

¹¹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:1–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Dake: [the bloody city] Jerusalem is called "the bloody city," because of the many murders committed there, especially of the saints and prophets by the wicked rulers (Ezekiel 22:2-4,6,12,27).

Clarke: Wilt thou judge the bloody city—Pronounce the sentence of death against the murderers.¹²

Dake: [all her abominations] Twenty sins of Judah and Jerusalem:

1. Murders—bloody city (Ezekiel 22:2-4,6,12,27)
2. Making idols (Ezekiel 22:3)
3. Worship of idols (Ezekiel 22:3-4)
4. Set light by (oppressed) father and mother (Ezekiel 22:7)
5. Oppressed the strangers
6. Vexed orphans and widows
7. Despised My holy things (Ezekiel 22:8)
8. Profaned My sabbaths
9. Slander—carry tales (Ezekiel 22:9)
10. Eat upon mountains in idolatrous worship
11. Committed lewdness
12. Committed adultery with father's wife (Ezekiel 22:10)
13. Humbled her that was set apart for pollution (or uncleanness)
14. Committed adultery with neighbor's wife (Ezekiel 22:11)
15. Committed adultery with daughter-in-law
16. Committed adultery with sister, the father's daughter
17. Took bribe to murder (Ezekiel 22:12)
18. Took interest for money lent
19. Extorted from neighbor
20. Forgot God¹³

Clarke: Show her all her abominations—And a most revolting and dreadful catalogue of these is in consequence exhibited.

Sin, Lawlessness—Continual sinning leads to loss of moral judgment. All laws are broken. Nothing is respected. Murder, idolatry, loss of respect and care for parents, injustice against the needy, destruction of others' reputations, sexual sin, bribery, loss of respect for God's day and His place of worship, illegal business practices—lawless sinfulness pervades and perverts life. One action stands behind such sin: we forget God, losing respect for His holiness. God does not forget. He punishes such lawlessness drastically.

¹² Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

¹³ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Ezekiel 22:3

Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself.

Clarke: Her time may come—Till now, it was my long-suffering; she has fulfilled her days—completed the time of her probation; has not mended, but is daily worse; therefore her judgment can linger no longer.

OTS 3-5: The first two charges against Jerusalem were serious indeed. She was “a city shedding blood in her midst.” The reference is to any wrongful death, especially one resulting from a corrupt judicial system and from child sacrifice. That the latter was probably in the foreground here is indicated by the second charge. She “makes idols” which cause her to be defiled before the Lord. These two major transgressions had brought near to Jerusalem the day of reckoning. Jerusalem would become a “reproach” to those near and far. She had the reputation of a city “full of turmoil,” i.e., lawlessness (22:3–5).¹⁴

Ezekiel 22:4

Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come *even* unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries.

Clarke: Thou art become guilty in thy blood—Thou art guilty of blood.

Bloodshed And Idolatry Two of Jerusalem's major sins were bloodshed and idolatry. They had established a standard of injustice, where the innocent were found guilty and put to death. The rich and connected, however, were getting away with murder.

Their idolatry had also become public and commonplace. Gone were the days of righteous kings who banned idols and put idolaters to death. Now, idols were prominent and being an idol-worshipper was the status quo.

The Nations Will Mock You When God judges Jerusalem for these sins, they will become "a reproach to the nations, and a mocking to all the lands." The sad fact is that when the righteous fail, the unrighteous have a party. When God's people fall, the devil's people lift up the moment.

The apostle Paul asked,
Rom. 2:23-24 You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,”...

People are always listening to the standards we say we live by. Not because they want to imitate our righteousness, but because they want to catch us in unrighteousness. They are hoping to unearth our failures, and thus justify themselves for not following God.

The apostle Peter exhorted us,

¹⁴ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:1–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

1Pet. 2:11-12 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Unfortunately, Jerusalem had failed to maintain their witness before the Gentile nations. Their reputation among the surrounding countries had become "ill repute." They claimed to be a righteous nation - governed by God, and uniquely blessed by Him. And so when they fell, the nations would take unique pleasure in mocking their destruction.¹⁵

Ezekiel 22:5

Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.

Missler: The word "bloody" in the Hebrew here is in the plural. That is a subtle form of emphasis that obviously we would miss in the translation. 7 times Jerusalem is spoken of as the bloody city in this chapter (v. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12 and 13).

Something else that is not obvious here, but would be an undertone both in this chapter and in some subsequent chapters, is that this idol worship also seemed somehow to be linked to judicial murders.

They had gone at sin in such a way as to become a reproach among the nations. Paul picks up the same theme in Romans 2:24, the whole idea that rather than being a witness, they went the other way.

An idea that will continue to surface in Ezekiel is the concept that God links His honor and dignity among the nations with the actions that His People display. On the one hand that is so obvious we might miss it; but on the other hand it is a very heavy idea. We will see throughout this God's wrath being invoked against this people. We need to be sensitive to the fact that God is not just judging sin in a classical sense alone. The underlying idea is that God links His dignity and His honor with THEIR ACTIONS.

God Himself was being profaned by these people, if we can say it that way. So where does that put you and me? I am not trying to spiritualize Israel; that is a whole other trip I do not want to get into tonight. But clearly there is a parallelism between the role of Israel to Jehovah, and our role to Jesus Christ. There is an analogy there. Clearly God's honor and dignity are being linked to their actions, and He is in effect forced to show Himself strong to protect His own honor and dignity because of their actions.

When you back away from the details and some of the quaint language and the fact that this was 2500 years ago, one of the things that really comes home is that God took this seriously. How much more serious with the illumination you and I have had! God indicts them because they of all people were chosen; they had the prophets and were given His special involvement in their lives. They rejected all that and profaned it, and made a mockery of it all. We are going to realize it will be kind of a heavy chapter as we go.

¹⁵ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

Recognize that there is a parallelism that may pinch us a little bit. You and I carry, in some sense at least, a responsibility to the honor and dignity of God. We like to emphasize His grace and His mercy and all that He has done for us; and we like to abide in the fact that our position depends entirely upon what He has done, not what we are going to do. As deep students of the New Testament doctrines, it is very valid that we are saved by grace, and not by works.

Nevertheless, doesn't that even give us a greater burden to carry? Can we speak of God's vulnerability? (A strange way to put it.) God is not really vulnerable; and yet, in a sense He is. He is vulnerable to being injured by your conduct and mine, just as His honor and dignity was tarnished among the nations by the actions of this rebellious people. That is what we are jumping into tonight.

Clarke: Those that be near—Both distant as well as neighboring provinces consider thee the most abandoned of characters; and through thee many have been involved in distress and ruin.

Ezekiel 22:6

Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood.

Clarke: Behold, the princes—Ye are a vile and murderous people, and your princes have been of the same character. Like people, like prince.

LAN 6-13: The leaders were especially responsible for the moral climate of the nation because God chose them to lead. The same is true today (see James 3:1). Unfortunately, many of the sins mentioned here have been committed in recent years by Christian leaders. We are living in a time of unprecedented attacks by Satan. We must uphold our leaders in prayer, and leaders must seek accountability to help them keep their moral and spiritual integrity.¹⁶

BKC 6-12: Ezekiel cited sins that specifically violated some of the Ten Commandments (cf. Ex. 20:1-17): social injustice (Ezek. 22:7), apostasy (v. 8), idolatry (v. 9), immorality (vv. 10-11), and greed (v. 12). The list concluded with another sin, the root problem behind the others: you have forgotten Me (cf. 23:35).¹⁷

OTS 6-9: The indictment continued with a catalog of sins committed in the midst of Jerusalem. Political leaders abused their power even to the point of bloodshed. Children treated their parents with contempt. The alien, widow and orphan had been mistreated. The city had shown no respect for sacred things. Sabbaths had been profaned consistently. Slanderers had sent many men to their deaths. Inhabitants had frequented the pagan shrines in the mountains (22:6-9a).¹⁸

¹⁶ LAN, Life Application Notes, Life Application Bible

¹⁷ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:6-12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁸ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:1-16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Family, Sexual Sin—Sexual sins show the destruction of a people. Only people who forget God can commit such sins. See note on Lev 18:6-20.

Nelson 6-12: Jerusalem's princes had shed the blood of innocent people (see 7:27; 11:1; 12:10; 19:1; 21:13; see also 2 Kin. 21:16; 23:36–37; 24:1–4, 18, 19). These evil leaders had been: (1) taking advantage of parents and the weak (see Ex. 20:12; 22:21–24; 23:9; Lev. 19:3; Deut. 24:17); (2) rejecting God and His covenant, leading to ungodliness and inhumanity (see Ex. 20:8); (3) murdering the innocent by slandering them (see Lev. 19:16); (4) preferring idolatrous religion and its immoral rituals (see 22:1–5; Deut. 12:1–2; 16:21, 22); (5) engaging in sexual immorality with neighbors, family, and relatives (see Lev. 18:6–23; 20:10–21); and (6) loving money and using it to get ahead of fellow citizens (see 18:5–9; Ex. 23:8; Deut. 23:19, 20; 24:6, 10–12; Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:5–10).

ESV 6–12: In you, that is, in Jerusalem, all the sins on this long list occur. Every area of life is defiled, for these sins violate God's laws for the protection of worship, parental authority, human life, marriage, property, and truth (in other words, all of the matters contained in the Ten Commandments; see Ex. 20:1–17).

6-7 Injustice Of Rulers God's Law had addressed the tendency of people to show favoritism, and warned the Jews against oppressing the alien, the widow, and the orphan:

Ex. 22:21-24 “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

The Law was clear and repeated numerous times (Deut. 24:17; 27:19; etc.). But the Jews had thrown God's law out the window when it didn't suit their purposes. Now, God will fulfill His promise to judge them for violating these commands.¹⁹

Ezekiel 22:7

In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow.

Missler: We are going to get into a whole list of moral areas, but it is interesting the order they go. There is a concentration here of symptoms that things are going to be. They start with the rulers, because the rulers influence the culture. One of the first authorities that gets undermined is the authority of the parents. Isn't that interesting? From here we could embark on a whole tangent of sociological comment about what happens to a culture, a nation, when the authority within the home breaks down. Does that sound a little contemporary to you? It does not take much imagination to deviate right out into the discussion of current-day teenagers...

¹⁹ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

This business of parents not being esteemed is dealt with in Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9; and Deuteronomy 27:16. The concept of the authority of parents has a heavy emphasis in Scripture. It obviously is one of the Ten Commandments, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

Now if the parents do not have any authority in the home, how much less will a stranger in the land who is passing through? See, there is a whole succession of protection that authority provides, and the lack thereof, or the corruption thereof, causes injury. Protection of sojourners is covered in Exodus 21:21 and 23:9.

Finally, of course, the most vulnerable of all, the fatherless and the widow, which is treated all through the Scripture, but dealt with in particular in Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 24:17 and 27:19.

Clarke: In thee have they set light—The children do not reverence their parents. Parental affection and filial respect do not exist among you. The stranger is not only not succoured, but he is oppressed. The widows and fatherless are vexed by wrongs and exactions.

7-8 Both the fourth and fifth commandments had been ignored by the people (Ex 20:8-12). There was contempt for all that was holy and a violation of the basic Hebrew ethic, i.e., respect for parents, hospitality for the "stranger" or sojourner, and concern for the helpless.

Chuck Smith: The princes here, rather than dealing righteously, were dealing by oppression: oppressing the stranger, oppressing the orphan, the widow, taking advantage of the weak.

Ezekiel 22:8

Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.

Clarke: Thou hast despised—All my ordinances are not only neglected, but treated with contempt; and my Sabbaths profaned. There is not only no power of godliness among you, but there is no form.

8-12 Numerous Abominations In these five verses, there are listed numerous sins which were being committed in Jerusalem without fear of consequence.

- They had despised God's holy things in the temple, using them for the practice of idolatry (Lev. 19:8).
- They had profaned His sabbaths, by failing to observe the weekly day of rest set apart for God (Exo. 31:14).
- Slander was commonplace, with people falsely accusing their neighbors of sins and crimes they didn't commit (Lev. 19:16).
- Four times in the book of Ezekiel the Lord uses the term "eating at the mountain" to describe the feasting which the Jews did at the high places, in honor of false gods (Lev. 26:30)

- Many acts of lewdness were also being committed in Jerusalem. Men were committing adultery with their fathers' wives (Lev. 18:6-8). They were violating God's laws regarding intercourse during menstruation (Lev. 15). They were committing adultery with their neighbors' wife (Lev. 18:20). They were committing immorality with their relatives (Lev. 18:9-17).

- Bribery was the regular order of business, even if it meant condemning innocent people to death.

- Loaning money at interest - which was forbidden by the Law (Lev. 25:36-37) - was a regular thing among the Jews at this point in their history.

- Gain by oppression is to be a "leg-breaker," or mobster. This kind of crime was rampant throughout Jerusalem.

²⁰God's people had forgotten God.

Ezekiel 22:9

In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

Missler: Corrupt informers, "men that carry tales to shed blood," are linked to the incidents of judicial murders which appear also in verses 6 and 9, and 23:27 and 24:6, 9. It seemed to be a very common theme for some reason. Examples of this are in 2 Kings 2:16 and 24:4. 11x these things are mentioned as being in the city; there was a major emphasis on that. Lies are bad enough. Informing against innocence is even worse. (See Lev 19:16.)

What is wrong with eating on the mountain? The concept of eating on a mountain is in its denotative sense obviously innocent. But connotatively, what the Lord was talking about through Ezekiel when He said, "They eat upon mountains," is that of participation in the feasts of the idols in their high places, at the sites of those idol worshipping systems.

"In the midst of thee they commit lewdness." I do not think we need to spend a lot of time on definitions here. Their idolatry involved indecent practices.

In our particular culture we have ample opportunity to be amazed at the crazy, insane and unnatural imaginations man can do to himself. It may not be obvious to you, but there is a link between idolatry, the worshipping of idols, and the lewd sexual abusive practices.

Clarke: In thee are men that carry tales—Witnesses that will swear any thing, even where life is concerned.

Clarke: They eat upon the mountains—Sacrifice to idols, and celebrate their festivals.

ESV: The prohibition against slander is linked to blood in Lev. 19:16 (where the word translated "life" is Hb. *dam*, "blood"). To eat on the mountains (cf. Ezek. 18:6, 15) is to participate in forbidden sacrificial rites.

²⁰ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

OTS 9-11: “Acts of lewdness” had been performed in Jerusalem. Men had “uncovered their fathers’ nakedness,” i.e., they had committed incest with a member of the family. A double sin was committed when men “humbled,” i.e., raped, a woman during her menstruous period. Adultery and illicit sex within the family circle were also common (22:9b–11).²¹

9-12 The phrase “slander to cause bloodshed” (v. 9) is a reference to false witness against one accused of an offense which carries the death penalty (Ex 20:16; Lev 19:16). Then follows a group of sexual sins. The men who “eat on the mountains” are those involved in orgiastic feasts at the high places, in which sexual promiscuity was common. To uncover the “nakedness” of one’s father is a form of incest, i.e., to contract a marriage with one’s stepmother (v. 10; cf. Lev 18:7, 8). Rules about menstrual purity were scorned (v. 10; cf. Lev 18:19); adultery and incest were common (v. 11; cf. Ex 20:14; Lev 18:9, 15).

Ezekiel 22:10

In thee have they discovered their fathers’ nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.

Clarke: In thee have they discovered—They are guilty of the most abominable incest and unnatural lust.

Clarke: On thee have they humbled—In their unholy and unnatural connexions, they have not abstained from those set apart because of their infirmities. The catalogue of crimes that follow is too plain to require comment.

Ezekiel 22:11

And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour’s wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father’s daughter.

Ezekiel 22:12

In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.

Missler: There are a lot of verses on various forms of incest, various forms of corruption. Leviticus 18 and 20 deal with it. Deuteronomy 22 and 27. I do not think there is any point in dwelling on that. There are explicit practices in Scripture in Genesis 38 and 2 Samuel 13. We will talk of it in the abstract intellectual sense, and not make it more vivid than the occasion calls for.

²¹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:1–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

One of the impressions you get is that there seemed to be no impurity that was overlooked; no moral standards that were not considered volatile.

Since God is at the center of all moral and social relationships, then all our social and moral rights are secure only when God is recognized in His sovereign rule.

One of the things that is really frightening in our society is the rejection of absolutes. It is very popular to say, "All things are relative," and make things very relative to one another. Coupled with this is the tendency to get rid of distinctions between black and white, good and evil. We are constantly confronted with shades of grey, never the clear choices and so forth. All of this, of course, is a subtle attack on the concept of moral or social security that you and I enjoy. That is part of what is being talked about here.

Ezekiel charged Jerusalem with bribery which led to executions. Oppression of neighbors through excessive profits or interest was yet another fault. The root sin which produced all the others in this terrible list was that Jerusalem had forgotten the Lord (22:12).²²

Christian Ethics, Property Rights—The horrible enumeration of economic injustices and abridgment of human rights which Ezekiel made could be applied to our own day. The signs of forgetting God's ways are seen in overcharging, extortion, oppression of the poor, and the denial of justice to those who have no advocate. Religious leaders face judgment when they ensure the support of their institution by ignoring or even supporting economic injustice.²³

ESV: This verse provides a fitting summary to the list of ethical vices: but me you have forgotten. A holy God cannot tolerate such behavior.

Chuck Smith: Of course, a person couldn't do these things without forgetting God. You see, if you're conscious of God you couldn't be doing these things. You've got to put God out of your mind to be able to do these things.

Ezekiel 22:13

Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

Dake: [I have smitten mine hand] Smiting the hands here was a sign of anger and contempt. A symbol of the judgment of God resting after it has been completed; or, it could be as the Septuagint reads, "And I also will clap My hands and let loose My fury." Sometimes smiting hands was a sign of contempt (Job 27:23; Lament. 2:15); anger (Ezekiel 22:13; Numbers 24:10); sorrow (Ezekiel 6:11); triumph (Ezekiel 25:6); or of a pledge or an oath (Genesis 14:22; Proverbs 11:21). It was the same as our shaking hands to confirm an agreement.

²² Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:1–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

²³ Disciple's Study Bible Notes

Wycliffe: The Lord's Judgment To Be Visited upon the Sinful Nation. 22:13-22.

13-16. *The necessity and certainty of the judgment.* 13. I strike my hands together (RSV). A gesture of disdain (cf. 21:14, 17). 16. Thou shalt take thine inheritance. Better, *I shall be profaned through you.* Read LXX *wfnihaltî bāk* in place of MT *wfnihalt bfkā*. The chastisement would be dispersion among the nations, by which the Lord would be profaned. Cf. 20:9; 36:20.²⁴

BKC 13-16: God would strike His hands together (cf. 6:11; 21:14, 17) in derision against Jerusalem. The proud and insolent people who treated God's commands lightly would not be able to dismiss His judgment. Their courage would vanish when God would disperse them among the nations. Moses had warned Israel that national disobedience would eventually lead to dispersion (cf. Lev. 26:27-39; Deut. 28:64-68). Israel had defiled God's Law; now she would be defiled in the eyes of the nations. After the nation was dispersed she would understand the character of the God she had scorned and forgotten: you will know that I am the LORD.²⁵

Their illicit gain and bloodshed had caused the Lord to clap his hands to summons the agents of his judgment. To drive home the implications of this statement, the Lord asked a rhetorical question. "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you?" By no means would they be able to stand against the enemies which God has summoned. The day of judgment on Jerusalem was certain because the Lord had spoken (22:13f.).²⁶

God reveals His planned actions against Jerusalem and Judah. The expression beat My fists (see 21:14–17) shows great anger. Defile yourself refers to the desecration and destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (2 Kin. 24:13; 25:9, 13–21).

Chuck Smith: And that, of course, I might say, is the result of putting God out of the minds of people. Then what do you have as a guide? What do you have as a standard for morality? What do you have as a guide for right and wrong? If you put God out of the minds of the people, if you declare there is no God, or God is so removed from His creation that He has no concern, then the people are cut loose, there is nothing as a standard for morality. There are no codes to follow. If every man must just experience for himself life and the various aspects of life relating to them and interpreting them for himself and there is no God to answer to, then the door is open for all of these things, and who's to say it is wrong? And so we have psychologists today written up in Time Magazine about three weeks ago who are advocating incest as a wholesome, healthy practice. Encouraging the parents to start sexual relations with their children when they are two or three years old so that they might understand a new dimension of love. But you see, if everything is relative, and if there is no God, then who is to say that is wrong? Who's to say adultery is wrong, fornication is wrong? High interest rates are wrong.

²⁴ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 22:13). Chicago: Moody Press.

²⁵ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:13–16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

²⁶ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:1–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Contracting for someone's murder is wrong, killing someone is wrong. Who says? What's your standard? You've put God out of the picture. That opens the door for anything that a man wants to do.

And so the whole key is there: you have forgotten Me. And that is the danger of putting God aside, setting God aside out of our educational system, where you can't talk about Jesus Christ. You can't talk about a belief in God. You can't advocate that they believe in God. So what are you doing? You're just opening up this whole sordid mess that we see in the world around us. We have sown the wind, as the prophet Hosea said, and now we're reaping the whirlwind. We are reaping the result of this whole secular humanism that was fostered upon our school systems by the Watsons and the Deweys and the Huxleys. And it's probably too late to reverse it. The die has been cast. I don't know how we can reverse it. Only God can reverse it, and that through the intercession of His people.

It is interesting as we read the things that were going on in Israel, they are the same things you read in your newspaper. Because they had forgotten God. If they had not forgotten God, if they had God in their minds and their hearts, in their consciousness, they couldn't do these things.

13-16 Smiting And Scattering Because their sin was rampant and they were unrepentant, they were about to be judged. God would cause them to lose their fortunes when the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem. He would scatter them to the ends of the earth.²⁷

Ezekiel 22:14

Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken *it*, and will do *it*.

Dake: [I shall deal with thee] Fivefold judgment on Israel:

1. I will deal with you (Ezekiel 22:14).
2. I will scatter you among the heathen (Ezekiel 22:15).
3. I will disperse you in the countries.
4. I will consume your filthiness out of you.
5. You will take your inheritance (more literally translated, You will forfeit your inheritance) in the sight of all the heathen (Ezekiel 22:16)

Ezekiel 22:15

And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

The judgment would serve a cleansing function for Israel. The Lord would scatter them among the nations. By this process he would rid the land of its uncleanness. The sinful people would “profane” themselves, i.e., be humiliated and debased, “in the sight of the

²⁷ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

nations.” Through this experience they would come to learn the true nature of Yahweh (22:15f.).²⁸

Ezekiel 22:16

And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

Missler: Here, of course, is one of the many, many passages that predicts the diaspora in several ways, in the immediate sense of their being taken to Babylon; but also in the broader sense, the more wholesale worldwide sense.

But one of the things you pick up here if you are careful and you watch is: What is the purpose for the dispersion? For what purpose was God going to disperse them into the countries? It was to purge the nation of their filthiness.

One of the things that fascinates me in Scripture is that cities tend to be the focus of all that is evil. Sin, and that which is ungodly, tends to blossom or flower in the concentrations like cities. People seem to get their spiritual strength, their growth, away from cities, when they are by themselves in the country or in the mountains.

That is a thought many commentators have made note of. In general, cities are downers. Basic sinful, evil inclinations tend to feed on themselves when man congregates in large groups; so cities thus tend to become mechanisms to amplify that which is evil. We would like to say, “It also amplifies that which is good,” but it is hard to find examples where cities are large spiritual fountainheads.

God chose to take this polluted nation which was given over to those practices, and purge it by scattering them into small elements. God used their very passions to be the mechanism of judgment. Chuck Smith has pointed out that, “Men become like the gods they worship.” If you worship Baal, you become like Baal. If you worship Molech, you become like Molech. If you worship the world, you will become like the world. It is interesting how God seems to use the gods we choose to be that which we become. That is the negative side. The positive side is that the same thing is true if we worship Jesus Christ. We will become increasingly like Jesus!

Clarke: Thou shalt know that I am the Lord—I shall so deal with and punish thee, that thou shalt be obliged to own the vindictive hand of a sin-avenging God.

OTS 17-22 The people of Israel had once been like precious silver to the Lord. Now they had become worthless dross. So the house of Israel would be gathered into Jerusalem just as contaminated silver is placed in a smelting furnace. There the Lord would pour out on them the fire of his anger and wrath. The nation would melt before that heat. In the fire of God’s judgment the dross (impurity) would be removed from the silver. As the events of 586 B.C. were seen in retrospect, no one would doubt that the Lord himself had poured out his wrath on that city.²⁹

²⁸ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:1–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

²⁹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:17–22). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

The means of judgment (22:17-22).

Ezekiel 22:17

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Dake: Five Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem, as they gather metals and put them in the midst of the furnace to blow fire upon them to melt them (Ezekiel 22:18-20).
2. I will gather you in My anger and in My fury, and leave you there and melt you (Ezekiel 22:20).
3. I will gather you and blow upon you in the fire of My wrath (Ezekiel 22:21).
4. You will be melted, as metals are melted in the midst of a furnace (Ezekiel 22:21-22).
5. You will know that I the Lord have poured out My fury upon you (Ezekiel 22:22).³⁰

LAN 17-22: Precious metals are refined with intense heat to remove the impurities. When heated, the dross (impurities) rises to the top of the molten metal and is skimmed off and thrown away. The purpose of the invasion of Jerusalem was to refine the people, but the refining process showed that the people, like worthless dross, had nothing good in them.

Wycliffe: 17-22: *Judgment on Israel under the figure of a smelting furnace.* For the figure, see also Isa 1:22, 25; 48:10; Jer 6:27-30; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2, 3. Here Israel is the raw material, Jerusalem is the furnace, Jehovah smelts the ore, and Israel comes out as dross! Note the repetition of ideas throughout this paragraph. 18. **House of Israel is to me become dross. Dross** was a symbol of worthlessness (cf. Ps 119:119; Prov 25:4; 26:23).³¹

BKC 17-19: Ezekiel's second message stressed that Jerusalem would become a furnace of affliction—a smelting furnace of judgment that would melt those who remained in it.

Israel had become worthless to God, for she was dross to Him—like the scum of copper, tin, iron, and lead left inside a furnace. Metallurgy was a developed science throughout the ancient Near East (cf. Job 28:1-11). When metals are heated in furnaces, the residue left after the pure metal is poured is the dross. To God, Israel was like **dross**—worthless because of her sin.³²

Nelson 17-22: These verses are primarily about God's chastisement of His sinful people through the burning of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (2 Kin. 25:9). Yet the verses also point to the fiery ordeals and trials that force all of us into a more perfect relationship with our Lord (see v. 22; Ps. 66:10; Jer. 9:7; Dan. 11:35; 12:10; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:1-3; James 1:2-4).

³⁰ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

³¹ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 22:17). Chicago: Moody Press.

³² Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:17-19). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ESV 17–22 The City of Dross. The metaphor of melting is found elsewhere in the OT: Jer. 6:29 makes similar use of it, while Isa. 48:10 provides a literal application. Here, however, the point is not to get purified silver but to be rid of the dross, i.e., Jerusalem's inhabitants (cf. Isa. 1:22, 25). Jerusalem is seen as a slag heap of useless dross.

Chuck Smith 17-22: Now it is interesting that when Moses was predicting the apostasy of the people in Deuteronomy, "When you've come into the land and you begin to pollute yourself in the land, and you turn from God and you forget God," and so forth, and this apostasy takes place, that Moses wrote in Deuteronomy that they would be burned with hunger and devour with burning heat. Here God says, "I'm gonna melt you in this caldron as silver and tin and iron are melted."

22:17-22 Like Dross The process of turning ore into metal is fascinating to me. The process is called smelting. Smelting is accomplished by filling a furnace with ore and heating it up. The metal naturally sinks to the bottom, while impurities float to the surface to form a scum, which is then scraped off. This scum is called dross.

God said to Ezekiel that the house of Israel had become dross to him. God desired pure silver, but they are the scum of impurity, floating to the surface and waiting to be removed.³³

Ezekiel 22:18

Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they *are* brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are *even* the dross of silver.

Missler: This is sort of a parable of the smelting furnace. Back in Chapter 15 we had God dealing with Israel as the worthless vine that did not bear fruit. Here he is going to talk about the smelting furnace. The same idiom is used in Isaiah 1:22 and Jeremiah 6:28-30, and other places where a prophet used a smelting furnace as an idiom of what God was going to do to Israel.

“Silver dross” sounds valuable; that can mislead you. The dross that comes up is worthless. When you are refining metals, the crud comes to the surface and you skim it off. That is one way to refine metals and get rid of the garbage stuff which you do not want.

Dake: [the house of Israel is to me become dross] Ezekiel used the term "the house of Israel" repeatedly in addressing the Jews at Jerusalem and those in captivity, so the Jews of the world today, as then, are the house of Israel (Ezekiel 22:18; Ezekiel 19:1; Ezekiel 20:1; etc.). It was in the midst of Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, that this house of Israel was living and where it was to be punished (Ezekiel 22:19). The people were compared to dross in the midst of a furnace. Lead put into a crucible with gold and silver causes the baser metals to retire, or form dross at the sides of the crucible, leaving the pure gold or silver in the middle. But here the silver itself became dross (Ezekiel 22:19).

³³ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

Clarke: Thou shalt know that I am the Lord—I shall so deal with and punish thee, that thou shalt be obliged to own the vindictive hand of a sin-avenging God.

Ezekiel 22:19

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

Dake: [into the midst of Jerusalem] The "house of Israel" of Ezekiel was in Jerusalem. It was therefore the same as the Jews, and that Judah was the true kingdom of Israel and representative of all the tribes.

Clarke: I will gather you—Jerusalem is represented here as the fining pot; all the people are to be gathered together in it, and the Chaldean fire is to knelt the whole. And God will increase thy sufferings: as the refiner blows the fire with his bellows, so God will blow upon you with the fire of his wrath, verse 21.

Ezekiel 22:20

As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you.

BKC 20-22: The dross was the by-product of smelting, but God was going to resmelt the dross. Much as metals are melted in a furnace, so God would gather the people inside the city and melt them. This thought is stated three times (vv. 20-22). Judah retreated to Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land. The city became the crucible as God's fiery blasts of wrath and judgment blew on the people. God's judgment and destruction forced the people to acknowledge Him: And you will know that I the LORD have poured out My wrath upon you.³⁴

The picture is of a metalsmith who sweeps away worthless fragments of various metals which had not been passed through the fire for purification. Ezekiel indicates that the people must be melted down by going through the refining fire in order to reclaim their worth as God's chosen people.

Ezekiel 22:21

Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

Missler: Quite frightening language! Can you imagine God saying this to you, that He would blow upon you in the fire of His wrath? 1 Thessalonians 5, and other places make

³⁴ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:20–22). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

it quite clear that the Church is NOT going to experience God's wrath. But what a terrifying thing that really would be! (See the briefing package, *The Prodigal Heirs*, for a study of the Church and Israel as distinct entities.)

The concept of the dross can be found in Malachi 3:2-3; and Zechariah 13:9. God is also seen as a consuming fire in the New Testament also (see Hebrews 12:29).

Ezekiel 22:22

As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

Missler: Oh, that we may never experience (except intellectually) what he is talking about here!

The idea of the smelting furnace and the idea of the fiery furnace might be an idiom also of the Great Tribulation, the Time of Jacob's Trouble. Here in Ezekiel, the fiery furnace referred to the fall of Jerusalem to be coming upon them in a couple of years under Nebuchadnezzar. The furnace that would melt them would be the Babylonian captivity in the near sense. There is a longer term sense which is broader in its scope; but here the near term focus was the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel was hundreds of miles away when he was writing all of this to the people who were still back in Jerusalem. He was telling them that they had had it; that the Lord was going to purge them, and use Nebuchadnezzar to do it. So in B.C. 586 he did take them all captive; it was the final of the three sieges and Jerusalem fell.

The recipients of judgment (22:23-31).

Ezekiel 22:23

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

WBH 23-31: *And no one even cares!* It seemed that all of Israel's leaders were hopeless sinners. While the priests profaned the Temple and ignored the Sabbath, political leaders took bribes, prophets spoke falsely, and the people committed robbery and mistreated the poor (Ezekiel 22:26-29). Not one righteous person could be found to stand in the "gap" in Judah's broken moral defenses (Ezekiel 22:30).³⁵

Beginning at the top of the social scale, Ezekiel indicts princes, priests, potentates, prophets, and people for their complicity in sin.

BKC: 23-24: This message names the recipients of the judgment: princes (v. 25), priests (vv. 26-27), prophets (v. 28), and people (v. 29).

In verse 24 the NIV has the Septuagint reading of rain instead of "cleansed" (see NIV marg.) because "rain" seems to match showers better than "cleansed." However, there is no compelling reason not to follow the Hebrew "cleansed." Because of her disobedience

³⁵ Willmington's Bible Handbook

Israel had not experienced cleansing (from sin); she had not received rain (blessings) in the day God sent His wrath.³⁶

Judah was a land not cleansed, i.e., defiled. She had not been “rained on,” i.e., spiritually blessed. She was facing the indignation of God. Prophets, priests, princes, and the people of the land were all to blame (22:23f.).³⁷

Sin, Unrighteousness—Leaders stamp a society with their moral values. Materialistic leaders produce self-centered people. This principle works in politics, business, and religion. When religious leaders echo the materialistic, selfish values of society’s leaders, a nation has no hope of a spiritual foundation. God targets such a people for destruction.

ESV 23–31: Systemic Failure. Here, rather than surveying behaviors (as in vv. 6–12), Ezekiel surveys personnel. The issue is still impurity (a land ... not cleansed, v. 24). This oracle almost serves as a commentary on 7:23–27 where prophet, priest, elders, and king mislead the city, although an even earlier “model” is found in Zeph. 3:3–4. The sum is a web of deceit, as these pillars of the community are seen as colluding.

23-29 Conspiratorial Prophets In these verses, God lists four kinds of people that were offensive to Him: Conspiratorial prophets, violent priests, bloody princes, and oppressive people.

The false prophets in Jerusalem had conspired together to give false hope to the people, all for monetary gain. "After all," they thought, "Who wants to pay money to hear bad news?" But in doing so, they had condemned the people to their deaths. Instead of repentance, there was false hope and security that God wasn't going to judge them for what they were doing.

Violent Priests Like the prophets, the priesthood had also been corrupted.

- They did violence to the Law.
- They profaned the holy things, treating them as common, ordinary, and defiled. They made no distinction between what was sacred and holy and what was common and ordinary. They didn't even teach the people the difference between what was clean and what was unclean.
- They hid their eyes from the sabbath - didn't do what God had commanded. They just pretended not to notice.

By doing these things, they had profaned God. He was being treated as common or ordinary.

Bloody Princes Third on God's list of offensive people were the princes of Jerusalem. They were getting rich on injustice.

Oppressive People The last people on God's list were the rest of the people. The population had become so corrupt that practically all of them wronged others for financial gain. Dishonesty had become an accepted way of life for the people of the land.³⁸

³⁶ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:23–24). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³⁷ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

³⁸ <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

Ezekiel 22:24

Son of man, say unto her, Thou *art* the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.

Dake: [not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation] Not only was Jerusalem a bloody city, but the whole land of Israel was unclean through sin, for which God had withheld rain upon it. This was in fulfillment of promises made to Israel in the days of Moses (Leviticus 26:19-20,26,33; Deut. 28:23-24).

Clarke: Thou art the land that is not cleansed—Thou art like a country where there is no rain, either to cleanse the garments, or fertilize the ground.

Israel is a land that is not rained upon. LXX, *wetted by rain*. A drought lies upon her (cf. 34:26). In the day of indignation. Day of Jerusalem's overthrow (cf. v. 31; 21:31).³⁹

This verse echoes the promises of Deut. 28:12, 24, where the abundance or absence of rain in the land is associated with obedience or disobedience to the Law.

Ezekiel 22:25

There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

Dake: [conspiracy] Twenty sins of Judah:

1. Uncleaness (Ezekiel 22:24)
2. Conspiracy against God (Ezekiel 22:25)
3. Preying on innocent people
4. Robbery
5. Murders
6. Transgression of the law (Ezekiel 22:26)
7. Profaned the holy things
8. Put no difference between the holy and the profane
9. Made no difference between the clean and the unclean
10. Polluted the sabbaths
11. Profaned Jehovah among the people
12. Rulers oppressed and murdered the people (Ezekiel 22:27)
13. Covetousness
14. Gave people false hope (Ezekiel 22:28; *Ezekiel 13:11-17, notes)
15. Lived in vanity (Ezekiel 22:28)
16. Divined lies
17. The people used oppressions (Ezekiel 22:29)
18. Men in general were robbers

³⁹ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 22:24). Chicago: Moody Press.

19. Vexed the poor and needy
20. Oppressed the stranger

Dake: [prophets] Four classes to be judged:

1. The prophets (Ezekiel 22:25)
2. The priests (Ezekiel 22:26)
3. The princes (including the king, Ezekiel 22:27)
4. The people (Ezekiel 22:29)

Clarke: There is a conspiracy—The false prophets have united together to say and support the same things; and have been the cause of the destruction of souls, and the death of many, so that widows, through their means, are multiplied in thee.

Her prophets. Read, *her princes*, substituting *nāsî*, “prince,” of the LXX for MT *nābî*, “prophet.” These were members of the royal house (cf. v. 6). The prophets are singled out in verse 28. Cf. 19:1; 21:12; 45:8, 9; Zeph 3:3. 26. Her priests. The *kōhen*. Cf. Zeph 3:4. 27. Her princes; i.e., her potentates or nobles, the *śarîm*, chiefs or leaders of the people. Cf. Jer 26:10; 36:12; Zeph 3:3. 28. Her prophets. The *nābî*. Cf. 13:10; Zeph 3:4.⁴⁰

The sins of her princes (though possibly this should read “prophets,” NIV marg.) were presented first. The “princes” probably referred to the royal family, including King Zedekiah (cf. 12:10-12; 19:1; 21:25). The leaders used their power for material gain, ravaging the people like a . . . lion (cf. 19:1-9). In their greed they took treasures and precious things; and they murdered, thus making many wives widows. Instead of being examples to the people, the leaders were corrupt despots.⁴¹

Her false *prophets* were saying, “Everything is fine. We’re getting along nicely.”

The prophets had entered into a “conspiracy” to preach only promises of peace. Like roaring lions tearing the prey, so they had devoured souls. They had amassed a fortune in treasure. By urging the leaders to revolt against Babylon they had brought the horrors of war upon the nation. Thus they had multiplied widows (22:25).⁴²

BSB: 25-29 In these verses the Lord is bringing an indictment against the leaders in Israel for their perversion of their offices: (1) the prophets for conspiring to take money and “devour[ing] people,” perhaps through false prophetic condemnations of innocent men or false endorsements of wars that left many widows; (2) the priests for failing to distinguish between holy and unholy, clean and unclean, which was their job (they apparently would allow anything to be sacrificed, which would enable the best to be kept back; cf. Mic 3:11; Mal 1:6-14); (3) the princes for destroying the people they were to protect, in order to get money; (4) the prophets again, this time for giving false messages,

⁴⁰ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 22:25). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴¹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:25). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴² Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

apparently “good” messages that people were willing to pay for, which was an aberration of their job (they were only to give a message if God told them); and (5) the people of the land themselves, for forgetting and mistreating the poor, the needy, and the stranger. Though they had been oppressed and robbed by the leaders set over them, they too became oppressors and robbers of those who were weaker than themselves.⁴³

The conspiracy of her prophets (Hb. *qesher nebi'im*) initiates this list. The lion metaphor was used of princes in 19:2–7.

Chuck Smith: So these prophets were greedy. They were always emphasizing giving money. "Send in your money, your dollars, you know." Greedy for gain. Representing to the people that God was always broke. His program was just out of funds, and you better rescue God this week, or next week it's bankruptcy. God's going out of business unless you come in and save Him from this terrible fate. The prophets were taking the treasure and the precious things from these little widows. Extorting their Social Security checks.

Ezekiel 22:26

Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

Missler: All those other things were clear sins, so black and white you could see them. But here was something you and I might easily miss. The sin of clouding the distinction between that which is good and evil. You and I face many occasions where we are confronted with issues that have to do with creating clear distinctions between what is good and evil. The clouding of that, the greying of that is Satan's tool.

It is really tragic that in our land before our courts, the guilt or the innocence of the accused is usually not the relevant issue before the bar. In our court system, in most trials we become aware of, the issue has to do with the rules of evidence, not with the guilt or innocence of the accused! In our common law country, we have failed to follow the common law principles, and implications that emerge from that trial for future use relative to rules of evidence, or what are sometimes called aggitative law, is secondary in consideration. In our country it has gotten upside down.

We are more concerned about rules of evidence than we are about guilt and innocence.

Even in England, from which we get our legal traditions, it is not that way; they are concerned with the fact of guilt or innocence. Now do not press the grammar too tightly; obviously you do not profane God in a literal sense. He was saying that this was the very extreme example of poor testimony, poor witness.

It is interesting that the first indictment here was laid on the prophets, because their influence was the widest. The persons who most influenced the society towards good or evil were the prophets, or whoever held the office of the prophets.

⁴³ Believer's Study Bible

Clarke: Her priests—Even they whose lips should preserve knowledge, have not instructed the people: they have violated my law, not only in their private conduct, but in their careless and corrupt manner of serving in my temple.

The priests were supposed to keep God’s worship pure and teach the people right living. But the worship of God had become commonplace to them; they ignored the Sabbath, and they refused to teach the people. They no longer carried out their God-given duties (Leviticus 10:10-11; Ezekiel 44:23). When doing God’s work becomes no more important than any mundane task, we are no longer giving God the reverence he deserves. Instead of bringing God down to our level, we should live up to his level.

BKC 26-27: The religious leaders were no better than the princes. Her priests do violence to My Law and profane My holy things (cf. Zeph. 3:4). They were not instructing the people in the ways of God, or enforcing the Law’s statutes. They even shut their eyes to the keeping of God’s Sabbaths (cf. Ezek. 20:16, 21, 24). Abandoning God’s precepts, they let sin run rampant among the people.

Other government officials besides those in the royal family (princes, 22:25) were also guilty of unjust gain. Instead of equitably dispensing justice and upholding the rights of the disadvantaged, they were like wolves tearing their prey.⁴⁴

Her *priests* blatantly violated the law of God.

The priests were just as bad. They had done violence to the law of God by their self-serving interpretations. They had profaned the holy things of God. They failed in their duty to teach the people the difference between the unclean and the clean. They hid their eyes from God’s sabbaths, i.e., they ignored the sabbath day. By all of these actions they had profaned God (22:26).⁴⁵

Ezekiel continued to deliver God’s message, insisting that right worship must be accompanied by right living. The correction of errors in liturgy would not replace public and private morality. The law of God is a way of life, a certain way of doing everything and not a way of doing certain things. The priests of Judah had failed to uphold their responsibilities to guard and interpret the law to the people (cf. Deut 17:8-13).

God, Holy—Ministers are consecrated to handle the holy worship and word of God. When they fail, the people have little hope.

The **priests** were not examples of separation from worldly ways (see Ex. 19:6; Lev. 11:44; 22:32). Some at least were motivated by monetary gain (see Mic. 3:11).

ESV: The **priests** were meant to be guardians of moral discernment (cf. Lev. 10:10; Mal. 2:4–7).

⁴⁴ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:26–27). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴⁵ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Chuck Smith: Some recent survey showed that some eighty percent of the ministers in the United States do not believe in hell as a place of punishment for the wicked. Sixty percent don't believe in heaven. Seventy-eight percent don't believe in the virgin birth. And then you get to the resurrection and all and you find unbelievers among the ministry. Well no wonder the church is dead. If there's nothing to be gained, why go? Nothing to be lost, why get involved?

The priests had violated the law of God; they'd turned against God. "I am profaned among them."

Ezekiel 22:27

Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

Clarke: Her princes—Are as bad as her priests; they are rapacious, and grievously oppress the people by unjust impositions in order to increase their revenues.

Her *princes* were “like wolves ravening the prey.” Paul has warned the church about wolves in sheep’s clothing (see Acts 20:29), and we do have them in the church today.

Why was Jerusalem called a bloody city? Because of the prophets, the priests, and the princes.

The vicious princes were like wolves tearing the prey. They were guilty of “shedding blood and destroying lives” in order to acquire “dishonest gain.” The prophets worked hand in glove with the princes in two ways. They (1) whitewashed their despicable lives; and (2) manufactured a false vision to further government policy whenever called upon to do so (22:27f.).⁴⁶

ESV: princes (plural of Hb. *sar*). Not the same term as that used at 19:1, where the reference is to royal sons; here the wider nobility is intended, or perhaps simply officials in the royal service. **Wolves** are lesser predators than “lions” (see 22:25).

Chuck Smith: Doing all of this in the name of God. All of this junky, fundraising stuff in the name of God. "The Lord hath spoken." Oh, I get these letters all the time, computerized letters. "The Lord laid you on my heart today, and God gave me a special message for you. He wants you to sit down and write out a check and send it to me. Thus saith the Lord, you know. Support me so I can buy my new yacht."

⁴⁶ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Ezekiel 22:28

And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

Missler [False Prophets]:

We are going to see here one of the strongest denunciations of false prophets in Scripture. False prophets, of course, are well dealt with in the New Testament; but they also were in the Old Testament: 1 Kings 22 and elsewhere. They were foretold as early as the Torah: in Deuteronomy 18. Obviously what we have here were false prophets; and the painful results were that they cost souls.

It was the role of the priest to sanctify that which was holy. Sanctify means set apart, restrict its use; not to cloud that which is holy and unholy by common use. That was the role of the priest; that was obviously what they were not doing. And the princes were using their own power for their own ends.

“Thus saith the Lord GOD” an important phrase as if it was not from God it would be a capital crime to use the phrase. Paul himself made a distinction when he was speaking of the Lord, or when he was just expressing a personal opinion. Several times in his letters he admitted it was just his own view and that he was not necessarily speaking with God’s authority.

Clarke: Her prophets—Even those who profess themselves to be my prophets, have been unfaithful in the discharge of their office; have soothed the people in their sins, and pretended to have oracles of peace and safety when I had not spoken to them.

BKC 28-29: The prophets should have been God’s spokesmen and denounced these wicked deeds; but (except for men like Ezekiel and Jeremiah) the prophets ignored those sins and gave the people false visions and lying divinations. They claimed to be speaking for God when the LORD had not spoken.

Then Ezekiel denounced the people, the commoners who followed their leaders’ example. The populace too was involved in extortion and ... robbery (cf. vv. 25, 27), and in oppression of the needy. So rulers oppressed the common people, and the common people oppressed the helpless.⁴⁷

Revelation, Messengers—See note on Eze 13:1-23. Revelation does not come automatically when humans call. God must send it.

plastered them: This probably refers to the prophets themselves. untempered mortar: The Hebrew word means “mud-plaster” or “whitewash.” These prophets were involved in “whitewashing” the sins of the nation’s leaders (see Matt. 23:27; Luke 11:39). If the proper antecedent for them is “princes” (v. 27), then the priests were also guilty of approving murder. divining: The false prophets used sheep livers in the hope of finding the will of the gods (see 13:7; 21:21).

⁴⁷ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:28–29). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

On false **prophets** being **smear**ed with **whitewash**, cf. 13:10–16.

Ezekiel 22:29

The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

Missler: The sojourner was the traveler; the stranger passing through had rights in the Scripture. There were very explicit rights in the Torah. And, of course, they were ignoring them. The stranger was the most defenseless. Being a sojourner, he would have no leverage on the local situation.

The people—All that have power or authority have abused it; vexed and oppressed the poor, the needy, and the stranger.

The people of the land (*‘am hā-āreṣ*). The common people. Cf. 7:27; 12:19; II Kgs 25:3, 19; Jer 37:2. 30. I sought for a man to ... make up the hedge, and stand in the gap. Cf. 13:5; Ps 106:23. The Lord sought in vain for a man to stem the tide of ruin and turn the fortunes of the people, but there was none. Compare Isa 59:15, 16; 63:5, where, in the absence of a man, the Lord’s arm brought victory. 31. God’s indignation and fiery wrath are poured out upon such a people (cf. vv. 21, 22; 9:10; Zeph 3:8).⁴⁸

The “people of the land,” i.e., the landed aristocracy, were guilty as well. They too engaged in oppression and theft. They wronged the poor and needy, oppressed the alien unlawfully (22:29).⁴⁹

Most likely the reference is to those leaders mentioned above. Zedekiah was weak and spineless, and openly disobedient to the Lord. Before Zedekiah there were two godly monarchs, Hezekiah and Josiah, both of whom forcefully and zealously sought to bring the people back to God. Yet even they did not change the course of history, though they did stay God’s hand of judgment by their faithfulness and dedication to the Lord. Now the Lord finds no such man to “stand in the gap.”

As go the leaders so go the followers (see 12:18, 19). The **people of the land** were average citizens or commoners.

Chuck Smith: The Lord is merciful. The Lord is plenteous in mercy, slow to wrath and slow to anger. But He will not always try, nor will He keep His judgment forever. In other words, there can come a day when God must judge. Though He is reluctant, yet His hand is forced. Now here, in the midst of this whole perversity, God was still seeking an excuse to show mercy and to forgive.

⁴⁸ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 22:29). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴⁹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Now, God puts a hedge around His people. Job had a hedge around him according to Satan complaining to God. "Have you considered My servant Job? Perfect man, upright, one who loves good and hates evil." "Oh, yes, I know that fellow. I've seen him. You've put a hedge around him; I can't get to him. You take down that hedge, you let me get to him and he'll curse you to your face. You see, you've blessed the guy, you've prospered him. Who wouldn't love you if you blessed and prospered? Anybody would serve you for that. Job's a hireling, God. Serving You because of prosperity. Take down the hedge."

God has a hedge around His people. But sin breaks down that hedge. Now God is looking for someone to stand and to build up that hedge. Man had become alienated from God. God was looking for some man to stand in the gap. Of course, Jesus is the one who came and stood in the gap for us. And has reconciled us to God through the blood of His cross. God said, "I sought for a man among them who would build up the hedge who would stand in the gap, but I found none." A man who would stand before the Lord for the land, an intercessor so that God would not destroy the land. But there was no one to intercede. There was no man there.

Ezekiel 22:30

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Missler: Remember that Daniel was not there, he was in Babylon, while we are here talking about Jerusalem. Jeremiah prayed for people who would not repent. Jeremiah in particular was not heard. Ezekiel did not call them to repentance; the thrust of his message in this part of his book was heavier. "Because you have done all of this, this IS what is going to happen..." Ezekiel's message was not a call to repentance; it was an indictment after the fact.

Who did finally stand in the gap and make up the hedge? The Lord Jesus Christ did for all of us in the ultimate sense. He had to be a man; he had to be a kinsman-redeemer to Adam, so he had to be a man. But he had to be pure, therefore the virgin birth. God said, "I sought for a man among them," and it was among them that Jesus was found. He did stand in the gap for us. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary is done. It is complete. Is there still a man God is looking for? The challenge in verse 30 could be for us to evangelize.

Dake: [I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none] God has always sought for a man—even one man to stand in the gap and build a hedge to turn away His wrath from men—and has been disappointed in many generations and with many nations. Here He could not find a man with influence enough to turn the hearts of the people away from sin and back to Him, so judgment had to fall (cp. Ezekiel 13:5; Jeremiah 5:1).

Clarke: I sought for a man—I saw that there was a grievous breach made in the moral state and feeling of the people, and I sought for a man that would stand in the gap; that

would faithfully exhort, reprove and counsel with all long-suffering and doctrine. But none was to be found!

LAN: The wall spoken of here is not made of stones, but of faithful people united in their efforts to resist evil. This wall was in disrepair because there was no one who could lead the people back to God. The feeble attempts to repair the gap—through religious rituals or messages based on opinion rather than God’s will—were as worthless as whitewash, only covering over the real problems. What the people really needed was total spiritual reconstruction! When we give the appearance of loving God without living his way, we are covering up sins that could eventually damage us beyond repair. Don’t use religion as a whitewash; repair your life by applying the principles of God’s Word. Then you can join with others to stand “in the gap” and make a difference for God in the world.

BKC 30-31: The corruption was so complete that when God searched for a man who could stem the tide of national destruction (build up the wall and stand . . . in the gap), none could be found. No one in a position of authority in Israel had the moral qualities to lead the nation aright. Obviously Jeremiah had these qualities, but he lacked the authority to lead the nation from the brink of disaster.

Israel’s extensive decay demanded justice. God concluded this message against Jerusalem by vowing to pour out His wrath and consume the people with His fiery anger (cf. 21:31).

Israel would suffer because of her sins. She had rebelled against God’s grace; now she would feel God’s wrath.⁵⁰

Throughout the entire nation God was searching for a real man (cf. Jer 5:1), someone who would “build up the wall,” i.e., the moral and spiritual wall which was Judah’s true protection from external threat. The Lord was looking for a national leader to “stand in the gap before me,” someone who would personally intervene where that wall had fallen into decay. Someone who put his life on the line. Someone who would beseech the Lord to spare the city, and who would match that prayer with mighty works of reformation. Such a national leader could avert the destruction which God had been threatening. God, however, could find no one who could or would fill this role (22:30).⁵¹

Prayer, Command of God—This could refer either to lack of prophets and teachers warning the land or to lack of intercessors. One task of a prophet was intercessory prayer. God wants people strong in prayer to intercede for His sinful people. See note on Isa 59:1-2.

sought for: God could not find a spiritual leader to guide the people in godliness. Why not Ezekiel? (See 3:17–21; 33:1–6.) A qualified leader is useless if people refuse to be led.

⁵⁰ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 22:30–31). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵¹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

ESV: There is no one to stand in the breach (cf. 13:5; Ps. 106:23) who might avert the destruction. Sometimes it takes only one courageous, righteous person to stop great evil, but there was no one.

30-31 No One To Stand In The Gap God had looked for somebody - anybody - to intercede for them. But no one was righteous enough to protect them from themselves, from their own sin. As a result, they would be destroyed.

A lot of people have asked me lately, "What can I do for you?" I always say, "Pray for us." But the response is very often, "Yes, but what can I do for you practically?" My answer is the same as the first time: "Pray for us." The ministry of intercessory prayer is so very neglected, and yet I believe it is one of the most powerful things we can do on this earth.

God was looking for an intercessor, someone to stand in the gap. Someone who will stand in the breach of the wall and offer the protection of prayer.⁵²

Ezekiel 22:31

Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

Dake: Three Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. I have poured out My indignation upon them (Ezekiel 22:31).
2. I have consumed them in the fire of My wrath.
3. Their own way have I recompensed upon their heads.

All these statements are in the past tense, but in reality they predicted things just about to happen to Jerusalem. From God's standpoint they had already taken place, because His word had gone forth declaring a speedy fulfillment.

Clarke: Therefore—Because of the profligacies already mentioned; because of the false worship so generally practiced; because of the false prophets tolerated; because of the unholy and profane priesthood; because of the oppressive princes; because of the unfaithful and deceiving prophets; because of the oppressions of petty officers; and because of the total corruption of manners in all ranks, places, offices, etc.:—

Clarke: Have I poured out mine indignation—consumed them with the fire of my wrath—Considering the above, has there not been sufficient reason why I should abandon such a people, and pour out upon them such a destructive storm of calamities?

The moral collapse of Judah would be followed by physical destruction. The judgment was so certain that God could speak of it as though it had happened already. He declared: "I have poured out my indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their way have I brought upon their heads" (22:31).⁵³

⁵² <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2201.pdf>

⁵³ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 22:23–31). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

There was not a man to be found in the land who could stand in the gap. I thank God He did find a Man to stand between my sin and a holy God. That Man is the Lord Jesus Christ, and God sees those who belong to Him in Christ. I am thankful for the Man who stands in the gap today!⁵⁴

Chuck Smith: No more mercy, but now judgment, retribution. Their own ways have been turned upon their heads.

Now as we see the conditions that brought upon the destruction of Israel, the things that were going on, we look around the land today we see the things that are happening here. History is repeating itself. The principles are still the same; God is still merciful, plenteous in mercy, and God is still looking for men to stand before God for the land. To build up the hedge, to stand in the gap lest He destroy. But God's judgment, though it lingers of a long time, will surely come.

⁵⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 22:31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.