

Ezek. 22:1 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
Ezek. 22:2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations.

Again, the word *judge* includes “to pronounce sentence, plead, reason.” We would normally read into that word the intent to judge with condemnation in the context of this sentence. I think the Lord is asking the prophet to pronounce condemnation on the people of Jerusalem/Judah for her wickedness, but I believe it is also with the intent to bring them to a position of repentance as would be indicated by pleading and/or reasoning. The Lord wants the people to recognize their *abominations* as morally disgusting and actions that the Lord hates (as indicated by the Hebrew). No longer could Jerusalem be called the “holy city”; she now is called the “bloody city.”

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 22:5 *Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.*

The prophet is to declare that the people of Jerusalem are responsible for the judgment to come. People are being killed and actions associated with idol worship are part of their immoral activities (e.g., sacrificing their children to Molech). The actions of the people have resulted in even the heathen nations (those who don't acknowledge God) looking down on them with reproach and scorn as a shameful and disgusting society. Jerusalem and its people had become *infamous*, famous for all the wrong reasons, and a place full of trouble and confusion (from the Hebrew for *vexed*).

Again, I can't help but make a comparison of Jerusalem and America today. Although there are still many good things associated with our country, we are becoming more known among the nations for our lack of morals, which have resulted largely from the freedoms we cherish and our apathy in protecting the biblical principles upon which our nation was founded. This seems to directly correspond with the attitude and actions of the people of Judah.

Ezek. 22:6 Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood.

Ezek. 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.

The “princes of Israel” refers to their kings. These verses are stating how the kings have abused their power by a disregard for life that resulted in the taking of life, lack of respect for parents, taking advantage of foreigners and/or visitors from other nations, and by not taking care of orphans and widows. These actions are all direct violations of the laws that God had given them.

Ex. 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

Ex. 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother:

Ex. 22:21 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him:

Ex. 22:22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

Ezek. 22:8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.

Despising the holy things would be a reference to the lack of esteem and honor with which they treated God's house, the holy temple, and the things in it. Profaning the sabbaths was again a reference to disregarding God's instructions regarding the Sabbath. These actions again reflect a complete contempt for the God with whom they were connected.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 22:10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

This is a sad commentary on the people of Judah. This is not a list of isolated actions; it is a list of actions that have become predominant in their society.

- Men speak gossip and slander that results in murder.
- "Eat upon the mountains" is a reference to idol worship and the celebrations that are associated with it.
- The actions of the people were *lewd*; they committed terrible crimes and wickedness with forethought (from the Hebrew for *lewdness*).
- They commit incest with the wives of their fathers.
- They have sexual relations with women who are menstruating.
- They commit adultery with the wives of their neighbors.
- They commit adultery with the wives of their sons.
- They commit incest with their sisters.
- They have hired and/or taken money as hired assassins.
- They profit by charging excessive interest rates.
- They profit from the practice of extortion.
- They have forgotten the Lord God—the root problem that has resulted in all of the above.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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*.

In verse 13 Ezekiel gives a picture of God striking His hands in anger at the evil practices of His people. The question posed in verse 14 is rhetorical; the understood answer is an emphatic "NO." God's judgment will instill great fear

into the people; their prideful, arrogant, and selfish ways will be destroyed. As God has spoken, so it will be done. The prophet Isaiah also declared this truth.

Is. 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Ezek. 22:15 And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

Ezek. 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.

As part of God's judgment, the people of Judah would be scattered among the heathen nations with the intent of purging them of all their wickedness as explained in the following verses. I didn't really think any of the translations were clearly understood in reference to verse 16. I think Adam Clarke's comment on this verse was more to the point, "I shall so deal with and punish thee, that thou shalt be obliged to own the vindictive hand of a sin-avenging God."

Ezek. 22:17 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

Ezek. 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.

God's message to the people through Ezekiel this time compares them to the *dross* (worthless waste matter) that is left after the refining of metals. The prophet Isaiah also talked about God refining His people. In His prophecy he spoke of God refining His people, but not with silver.

Is. 48:10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver;

As I considered the difference in the prophecies, I am convinced that Ezekiel's prophecy reaches on into the future when God's people are scattered among the nations and will be refined as silver. The judgment that resulted in the Babylonian captivity was meant to refine the people and purge them of their wickedness, but not to the point of producing silver (a very precious, valuable metal). Verse 22 above tells us that Ezekiel is speaking of a refining process that will be equivalent to that of producing silver. When the people of Israel have endured the refining of around 2000 years of persecution among the nations culminating in the 70th week of Daniel that we know as the tribulation, they will have endured a refining fire powerful enough to produce pure silver. I found an article on the internet that I had heard used before and that I used in my journal on Isaiah 48 that I think bears repeating here.

Malachi 3:3 says: "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible Study.

That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot then she thought again about the verse that says: "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver." She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?"

He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy - when I see my image in it."

The time is coming when the Lord will be able to see Himself reflected in the nation of Israel once again. They will recognize God for who He Is and be ashamed of who they have been.

Ezek. 22:23 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 22:24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou *art* the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.

Ezekiel is declaring the word of the Lord that His judgment will result in Jerusalem/Judah looking like a wilderness that hasn't experienced the refreshment or benefits that come with the blessing of rain.

This just made me think again of how many of God's blessings we take for granted—the rain, the sun, the moon and stars, the clouds, the air we breathe, etc.

Ezek. 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.*

"conspiracy" = unlawful alliance, treason

The *prophets* were supposed to declare God's truth to the people. They had obviously greatly abused their position. Their abuse had resulted in the destruction of the souls of men and the unlawful accumulation of the people's treasures. It sounds as though they were charging a fee for people to hear their

message, and then delivering a false message that resulted in loss of life and destruction of souls. Without faith in God, these people had no hope for eternity.

This is a very sobering thought. When we as God's servants don't declare the truth of His word, we are contributing to the destruction of the souls of men.

Ezek. 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 shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

The *priests* were to be God's servants among the people; they served as intercessors. They too had abused their position by violating God's laws and misusing His holy things in the temple. They no longer treated holy things as holy and valued what was clean over what was unclean. They were ignoring God's instructions for the Sabbath. They no longer revered God as holy.

At first read we often don't realize that there is application to the church today (at least in America) in all of God's dealings with Israel, but there definitely is. The priests would be equivalent to the pastors/priests/bishops of today—any who claim to be called as overseers of the body of Christ in the church. The sad thing is that I can make many comparisons today with what was happening in Ezekiel's day. More and more often I am hearing "pastors" of churches be hesitant to stand up for the truth of God's word; some even outright deny it. Many appear to be in it more for the profit they can make than as servants of God Almighty. Many are no longer willing to identify sin for fear of alienating the masses. The differences between today's pastors and Israel's priests are becoming less and less discernible.

Ezek. 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.

This verse indicates that there is very little difference in how the kings/royalty of Israel operate and how the prophets operate as described in verse 25. In Israel in particular the kings, prophets and priests were all to be serving God as servants of the people according to the laws established by the LORD God of Israel. They should have been working in concert with one another to lead the people to a closer relationship with God. Instead, they were each one living to serve self and satisfy selfish desire rather than serving God.

Ezek. 22:28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered *morter*, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

I think the wording of the NLT expresses the truth of this verse more vividly.

And your prophets announce false visions and speak false messages. They say, 'My message is from the Sovereign LORD,' when the LORD hasn't spoken a single word to them. They repair cracked walls with whitewash! The comparison to some "prophets" of today is obvious.

"daubed them with untempered mortar" – This is speaking of appearing to make needed repairs by using the wrong stuff—inadequate material. These prophets,

as many pastors today, were addressing the problems of the people with lies that eased their conscience rather than with the truth of God's word that has the power to bring man to repentance and salvation.

Ezek. 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.

The results of such bad leadership were that the people were cruel in their efforts to make profit unlawfully; they were thieves; they violently mistreated the poor and needy; and they took cruel, unjust advantage of strangers.

Ezek. 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.

This verse was a bit disconcerting at first read, since I immediately thought of Jeremiah and his servant who were active in Jerusalem at that time. JFB's commentary was enlightening.

"...not that literally there was not a righteous man in the city. For Jeremiah, Baruch, etc., were still there; but Jeremiah had been forbidden to pray for the people (Jeremiah 11:14), as being doomed to wrath. None now, of the godly, knowing the desperate state of the people, and God's purpose as to them, was *willing* longer to interpose between God's wrath and them. And none "among them," that is, among those just enumerated as guilty of such sins (Ezekiel 22:25-29), was morally *able* for such an office."

Ezek. 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.

The first thing I noticed about this verse is that it is stated in the past tense as a deed already done. As noted earlier, once God speaks His word, it is as good as done (cf comments at verse 14). The Lord GOD makes it clear that this judgment is an outpouring of His wrath. It is another statement of the truth of the law of reaping what you sow.

Job 4:8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

Gal. 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.