

The Visions of Ezekiel

Lesson 16

Ezekiel's Twenty-sixth Assignment from the LORD

5. Judge the Bloody City

22:1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 22:2 "And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then cause her to know all her abominations.

It would seem that when the LORD asked Ezekiel twice about the judgment of the “**bloody city**,” it would be a judgment against the capital of Ammon, but it was not. It was a judgment against Jerusalem and the kings who have sat on its throne and caused the city and nations to indulge in such sin. It was time for the LORD to list her crimes.

a) Name the Bloody Crimes

(1) Idol Worship

22:3 "You shall say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "A city shedding blood in her midst, so that her time will come, and that makes idols, contrary to her interest, for defilement! 22:4 "You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and defiled by your idols which you have made. Thus you have brought your day near and have come to your years; therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations and a mocking to all the lands. 22:5 "Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you of ill repute, full of turmoil.

Human sacrifice in the realm of idol worship was acceptable throughout most of the world around Israel in the days of Ezekiel. However, the extent of the practice was excessive in Jerusalem at that time even for the surrounding countries. The nation was getting a terrible reputation for their sacrificial practice, specifically concerning children. For that sin, the LORD would not tarry with His punishment much longer.

(2) Shedding of Blood

22:6 "Behold, the rulers of Israel, each according to his power, have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood. 22:7 "They have treated father and mother lightly within you. The alien they have oppressed in your midst; the fatherless and the widow they have wronged in you.

Beginning with King Manasseh, the most evil of the Southern Kingdom kings, the rulers were to a great extent bloodthirsty. It is thought that Manasseh put Isaiah in a dead tree and had him sawed in half. We could list the evil of each king, some had moments of religious revival in their reigns, but from Manasseh on, they were all bloodthirsty toward parents, strangers, orphans and widows.

(3) Despising of the Sabbath

22:8 "You have despised My holy things and profaned My sabbaths.

To add to the humiliation of the LORD, the important and holy relics of the LORD and His all important day of rest were despised in the city of Jerusalem.

(4) Slandorous Lies

22:9 "Slandorous men have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood, and in you they have eaten at the mountain shrines. In your midst they have committed acts of lewdness.

The word “**slandorous**” means *a description of a false statement intended to impair a reputation*. In this case, the lying evidently resulted in the death of innocent beings. Furthermore, the men of Israel who were told to steer clear of “**mountain shrines**” indulged in the meat offered in that place in idol worship. We have discussed the meaning of the word “**lewdness**” several times in this book of Ezekiel. As a reminder, it means *an evil plan*. The people of the city were just that; they “**committed acts**” with an evil plan.

(a) Unholy Relationships

22:10 "In you they have uncovered their fathers' nakedness; in you they have humbled her who was unclean in her menstrual impurity. 22:11 "One has committed abomination with his neighbor's wife and another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law. And another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

What were the evil acts of “**lewdness?**” Unholy relationships! All warned about as sin in the Levitical law. Abominable incest. Enough said.

(b) Bribery and Murder for Profit

22:12 "In you they have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord GOD.

Greed! Murder for money. Injury for money. Oppression for money. All against the law of the LORD. At this point in Jerusalem, there were few who even cared about the LORD any longer.

b) Explain the Bloody Punishment

(1) A Hand Slap from the LORD

(a) A Heart that Cannot Bear it

(b) A Hand that Cannot Take it

22:13 "Behold, then, I smite My hand at your dishonest gain which you have acquired and at the bloodshed which is among you. 22:14 "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I will deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken and will act.

The LORD would not take it any longer. Punishment was due. Even sinners, caught in the very acts of their sin have a heart. The heart that does evil is suddenly softened when danger appears, even in a heartbeat. The revelry and evil of the people of the Southern Kingdom may have satisfied them for a time but when the LORD slapped them with His hand, they would know it. Their hearts would not be able to sustain them, and their hands would not be strong enough to save them. They would be destroyed by the hand of the LORD.

(2) A Scattering by the LORD

22:15 "I will scatter you among the nations and I will disperse you through the lands, and I will consume your uncleanness from you. 22:16 "You will profane yourself in the sight of the nations, and you will **know that I am the LORD."**

When the LORD slaps them, those who do not die will be scattered across the world. The filth will go with them and they will die at the hands of rulers in other nations. When the LORD said, “**I will**

consume your uncleanness from you,” that was the way we would say, “*Southern Kingdom and Jerusalem, you are going to be wiped clean of the sinners in your midst.*”

Ezekiel's Twenty-seventh Assignment from the LORD

6. Gathered to the Center of Jerusalem

22:17 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 22:18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; all of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace; they are the dross of silver. 22:19 "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because all of you have become dross, therefore, behold, I am going to gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

This short assignment for Ezekiel deals with the destruction of those living in Jerusalem. From the previous lesson we discovered that the green trees that surrounded the city would be ignited and the forest would burn intensely. We also learned the fire would travel from the south to the north. Additionally, Nebuchadnezzar would break through the north gate to enter the city. The fire would push the people within the city to the north, Nebuchadnezzar would cause them to back up to the fire as close as they could. In the center of the city, all the remaining inhabitants would gather. There in the pot, a metaphor that has been used repeatedly in past portions of Ezekiel, the LORD would burn all the inhabitants.

a) Melted in the Center of Jerusalem

22:20 'As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in My anger and in My wrath and I will lay you there and melt you. 22:21 'I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you will be melted in the midst of it. 22:22 'As silver is melted in the furnace, so you will be melted in the midst of it; and you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath on you.'"

In the midst of the city, with the forest burning without and the structure of the city burning within, the LORD would blow a wind and cause the fire to intensify just as a billow increases the heat in a blacksmith's forge. The wrath of the LORD would burn and consume the sinners in the city.

Ezekiel's Twenty-ninth Assignment from the LORD

7. A Land of Indignation

22:23 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 22:24 "Son of man, say to her, 'You are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.'

The land was filled with indignation. It was filthy with sin. Because of that, the LORD sent a famine to dry up the lands and limit the food resources. This had not happened yet in the timing of this story. It was yet to begin during the next four years. The LORD would be the one to control nature and make this happen.

a) A Conspiracy of Prophets

22:25 "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her.

The prophets had used their positions in the community for their personal gain of “**treasure and precious things.**” In the process, men, the bread winners for the hour, were killed.

b) A Profaning by Priests

22:26 "Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught

the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

The religious leaders of the community were not better than the prophets. They had changed the Law of the LORD for evil purposes. They had also **“profaned”** the LORD’s possessions. We have not defined the word **“profane”** to this point in this commentary and we should. The word means *to make common*. In this passage we must understand that the priest of the Temple had become corrupt. They were guilty of taking the holiest of holy utensils of the Temple and they put them to use at their home tables like common everyday knives, forks, pots and pans. They had taken the ceremonially clean vessels and used them for unclean purposes. Besides that, they had ignored the required rest, the required offerings and the LORD of the sabbath. They had taken the name of the LORD in vain, used Him as an excuse for their actions, proclaimed His name to force people to do things they would not normally do, all in the name of the LORD. They had made the LORD’s name so common that it held no holy place in the city.

c) A Violence by Kings

22:27 "Her princes within her are like wolves tearing the prey, by shedding blood and destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain.

The kings were just as bad as the prophets and priests. They, too, used their power to kill for unjust enrichment.

d) A String of False Visions

22:28 "Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.

How had all this happened in the most holy city of the LORD? The prophets had led the way with false visions – all lies. They needed to use only one phrase to convince the people to do what they did not want to do, go where they did not want to go, say what they did not want to say, be what they did not want to be, sin when they did not want to sin – **“Thus says the LORD God.”** Lies! Terrible lies. False visions that the LORD had not said to them, **“Thus says the LORD God.”** Today, because the LORD instilled the *priesthood of the believer* in everyone within the Church, if a religious person ever tells you to do or say something by saying first, *“The LORD told me to tell you,”* chalk it up that he is lying, and run from that person’s teaching immediately.

e) A Practice of Robbery and Oppression

22:29 "The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice.

Here the LORD sums up to Ezekiel the problem with the people left in the city of Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom in general – everyone left had participated in the sins against the LORD. Is this an absolute truth! Had everyone participated in the sins? Yes! How do we know? We know because of the LORD’s next statement to Ezekiel.

f) A Lack of Righteous Leadership

22:30 "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.

Not one man was found in the city who would **“build up the wall and stand in the gap.”** We might say, *“What about Jeremiah? Wasn’t he a man who was willing to build the wall and stand in the gap?”* Yes, he was willing; however, he was not in Jerusalem. He had been taken to Egypt in chains.

g) A Consuming Fire from the LORD

22:31 "Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord GOD.

Therefore, based on all that the LORD had said to Ezekiel, He was ready to burn the city to the ground. The *elders of Israel* with Ezekiel had not had the opportunity to say one word. To make matters worse, the LORD was not through with His message to them yet in this vision.