

Ezekiel 22 – The Indictment Against the Princes of Israel

By Holly Effiom

VV1-2

To whom is God pointedly directing His question?

Had He asked this of Ezekiel before? Eze 16:2; 20:4. What was God demanding at that time?

Why does God keep asking this?

What does God want Ezekiel to do now?

LESSON: “Now will you judge the bloody city?” The manner in which God directs this question to Ezekiel reminded me of how we often equivocate over things we know to be wrong, because we “Don’t want to judge...” Our silence aids and abets the crime.

This section of scripture makes me so sad. And I pray, if I’m misunderstanding, please God, correct my understanding to align with Yours.

I believe that God has to keep asking Ezekiel if he’s going to show Jerusalem her abominations, because he had not done so – he had *not* been doing his job. If it was out of ignorance, God *educated* him in Eze 8, showing him what was going on in a secret room *within* the temple. If it was for lack of words, God plainly *spoke* the words in Eze 16, calling Jerusalem an “...imperious whorish woman”. If it was for lack of understanding of the mission or imperative, God made it clear in Eze 20, having given them statutes “...which if a man do, he shall even live in them...”; and what was the response of the princes of Israel when Ezekiel finally dropped his word “...toward the south...”? They played *stupid*, and Ezekiel was finally *outraged!*

VV3-5

What is the message that Ezekiel is to give?

What is going on in the city that is causing an end to its existence? 2 Kings 21:1-18

Is 2 Ki 21:7 related to Eze 8:5?

What does “...art come even unto thy years...” mean?

What did God allow to happen, because of Jerusalem’s behavior? Dt 28:37

Is it only their neighbors at that time who will mock them?

What will happen to Jerusalem as a result?

LESSON: “You’re killing people!” is the message that God wants Ezekiel to scream from the highest mountain. It was bad enough that Jerusalem was defiling itself in its abominations, but it was also causing death among the people she was supposed to *serve*.

We learn in this section of scripture that Jerusalem’s end was being set by its own behavior and response to the warning of God through His prophets, not invaders from the east – Babylon. Jerusalem will become renowned to her neighbors, near and far, for the vexations she will suffer – vexations she has brought upon herself.

VV6-12 Indictments against the princes of Israel:

1. In thee to their power to shed blood;

What were the princes of Israel doing with the power that they had?

How is this behavior related to Eze 7:10-11?

2. In thee have they set light by father and mother;

What is the significance of treating your mother and father contemptuously? Ex 20:12

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3. In the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger;
Who is the “stranger” oppressed in the community? What about today?
Why would the “stranger” fall under God’s special protection?
4. In thee have they vexed the fatherless and widow;
Was it only the “stranger” who is being mistreated?
Why are “widows” and the “fatherless” afforded special protection from God? (Ex 22:22-24)
In what way have the princes of Israel despised the holy things and desecrated God’s Sabbaths?
5. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood;
What were the men of Jerusalem willing to do?
Was “everyone” in Jerusalem doing this?
Would God punish the whole city for the sin of the few? Eze 18
6. In thee they eat upon the mountains;
What does “...eating upon the mountains...” refer to? Eze 20:28-30
7. In the midst of thee they commit lewdness;
What message is God sending in calling out these people’s “Lewd” behavior?
8. In thee have they discovered their fathers’ nakedness; Lev 18
What is it to uncover thy “father’s nakedness”? Gen 9:20-29; Gen 35:22; Gen 49:3-4
9. In thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution; and
One hath committed abomination with his neighbor’s wife, and
Another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and
Another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father’s daughter;
How is “set apart for pollution” similar to uncovering “thy father’s nakedness” in this context?
10. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; Ex 23:1-9
Thou hast taken usury and increase, and
What is usury? Why is it wrong?
Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion, and
In what way do the princes of Israel extort their neighbors?
What does the behavior of the princes of Israel tell you about them? “Hast forgotten me.”

LESSON: The indictment against the princes of Israel clearly shows how the leaders of Jerusalem had transgressed the law, including those who daubed the sin with “untempered mortar”; however, all of Jerusalem will suffer as a consequence of the transgressions of the leadership, in that the city will no longer exist as a nation. The people who bore the “blame” for all the ills and failures of the nation were the vulnerable – those who were “different” among them (the stranger) and those who did not have the protection of a man (the widow and fatherless), or wealth.

VV13-16

- To what does God smiting His hands refer? Eze 21:17
- What do we now understand this to mean?
- Why does God ask “Can thine heart endure...”?
- What does this say about how the princes of Israel saw themselves, during that time?
- What does God promise to do to the princes of Israel?
- What is to be accomplished in scattering the nation?

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Why does God discipline the princes of Israel in the sight of the heathen? How is it related to Eze 16:35-42?

LESSON: When God smites His hands, judgment falls; and we learn what He is judging:

- The dishonest gain, and
- The spilling of blood.

When God asks, “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee...” I believe, He is telling the powerful in the nation that He will treat them in the same manner they treated the vulnerable in their care, expecting them to bear up under *extreme* maltreatment.

Jerusalem was being punished in the sight of the heathen as an object lesson for that final Gentile world power.

VV17-18

What is dross?

What was the house of Israel before they “became” dross?

Who does God liken to dross?

What is significant about brass, tin, iron, and lead in a furnace?

What other metal is found in the furnace?

What does the singling out of this metal signify?

How will the princes of Israel be similar to these metals in the furnace?

LESSON: Dan 2:38-48 has taught us the hierarchy of valuable metals, yet in Eze 22:17, God calls all the metals “dross” – the impurities that are burned off when any one of the metals are heated – *including* the silver. In Eze 21, God has declared Himself *against* Jerusalem, and now here in chapter 22, we begin to understand what that means – Jerusalem has lost His esteem.

My heart breaks for Jerusalem at these words.

I think of those who *love* Israel and pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and yadda yadda yadda, and I wonder, do you *truly* love Israel? Do they truly *desire* the peace of Jerusalem? I wonder, because many of the same people saying this, actually, *hate* the stranger and *oppress* the widows and fatherless among them. Do they truly *love* Israel, or are they trying to hang in there and *associate* themselves with Israel because they know the future, because they *know* God will “return Israel’s captivity”?

If you truly *love* Israel and *desire* peace for Jerusalem, as you say, you would not *do* the things for which Jerusalem is being judged; you would not do things for dishonest gain; you would not be so quick to spill blood; you would not oppress the stranger, the widow, the fatherless. You would instead, sow the commandments of God in your heart – or as Moses put it, “circumcise the foreskins of your hearts”; you would walk in, breathe in, and live in the commands of God.

These are things that Israel – the very leadership of Jerusalem itself, the head of nations – did *not* want to do.

VV19-22

Why does God use the example of a smith?

In what way does God liken Himself to a smith?

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To where does God gather the house of Israel?

Why Jerusalem? Jer 44:15-30

LESSON: This is how the lands of Judah became bereft of anyone of the house of Israel, such that by 1948, the land was once again inhabited by nearly everyone but a Jew.

Jerusalem was a crucible for the children of Israel, just as it is for the entire world. Jerusalem represents the house of Israel bowing its knee to God, when it *clearly* preferred to bow its knee to anything *but* God – that is, bowing his knee to himself and his own will. Is this not the story of Adam, of the whole world?

It is important to note that just as not all the house of Israel behaved in this manner, such will be the case in the end time – not all of Adam will bow its knee in idolatry. The small number who did and do were permitted to have and keep power and wealth enough to corrupt many and overpower the children of God, just as it is spoken in Daniel 7:25. This is what is being described in Adam and Eve eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

I am reminded of Jesus’s comment in Luke 16:8-9 about the children of the world being wiser than the children of light.

VV23-29

Why does God say that the land had not be cleansed? Num 35:33-35

What is one way in which God showed His displeasure over the defiled land?

What is the job of a prophets? Were the prophets doing their job? What were they doing?

What is the job of the priest? Were the priests doing their job? What were they doing?

What is the job of the prince? Were the princes doing their job? What were they doing?

In what way were the prophets “helping” these princes?

What is the job of the people of the land? Were they doing their job? What were they doing?

LESSON: Looking at the roles of the Prophets, Priests, and Princes as an individual, that individual would say what God says – speak the *truth*; that individual would abide by God’s commandments – exhibit *discipline*; that individual, listening to the words of the prophets and seeing the law lived out by the priests, would understand his exalted position and responsibilities – would rule accordingly. And, the people under the rule of that prince would follow the example he sets. Micah 6:8 describes this concept in the following manner:

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of thee [Prophet], but to do justly [Priest], and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God [Prince]”

Instead, the princes are violent and murderous for “dishonest gain”; the prophets “white-wash” this bad behavior, and priests spend time seeing to their own benefit, including telling lies; and in the end the people suffer, bringing judgment upon themselves by behaving like the leaders – oppressing and stealing from the vulnerable, and attacking without cause those who are not like themselves.

These things were happening in Jerusalem in her day; they will also occur in Babylon, the final Gentile world power, in *her* final days.

VV30-31

What was God seeking in the generations? Isa 59:16-21

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What would that man do? Ps 106:23; Ex 32:11

What would have happened if such a man had been found?

Was such a man found?

So, what happened?

LESSON: This is such an interesting turn of phrase, "...I sought for a man among them..." This is not the first time that this sentiment, if not exact phrase, was expressed in scripture. It's as if God looks across time in the earth, and He saw Abraham and Moses, and decided to work through these men to improve the possibility of there actually *being* one to stand in the gap; He saw Joshua; He saw the judges; He saw Job; He saw Ruth and Naomi; He saw the good kings, especially David and Solomon; He saw Ezra and Nehemiah; He saw Esther; He saw Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the prophets who would keep His words alive in the ears and hearts of the people, as the princes began to fail with frequency; He saw Jesus, Who would be a covering for His own among the nations, until that final prince was revealed that would choose *not* to be that one that must stand in the gap.

God saw from the beginning that there would come a time when the last man that could stand in the gap against destruction would refuse to do so. But we knew this. What is *most* beautiful about this phrase "...I sought for a man among them..." is that it is God's heart to *find* one among us to hold back destruction.

And, because God saw this day, which would be Adam's last, He prepared One who understood and accepted the task of standing in the gap on behalf of *all* mankind before God Almighty, perpetually. No more good king-bad king; No more good policy-bad policy; No more fear, no more anger; no more seeing "... through a glass, darkly..." 1 Cor 13:12

Hallelujah!