

Review

The destruction of Jerusalem is certain, and God is having Ezekiel prophesy to the Jews in captivity regarding its impending doom.

22:1-2 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.

22:3-5 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,

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.

22:6-7 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.

22:8-12 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.

God's people had forgotten God.

22:13-16 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.

22:17-22 Like Dross

The process of turning ore into metal is fascinating to me. The pro-

cess 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.

22:23-29 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.

22:30-31 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.