

# EZEKIEL

## Chapter 22

### *Israel's Shedding of Blood*

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 “And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to her all her abominations. 3 You shall say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time may come, and that makes idols to defile herself! 4 You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time of your years has come. Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. 5 Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you; your name is defiled; you are full of tumult. 6 “Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. 7 Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. 8 You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths. 9 There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst. 10 In you men uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity. 11 One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter. 12 In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD. 13 “Behold, I strike my hand at the dishonest gain that you have made, and at the blood that has been in your midst. 14 Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it. 15 I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will consume your uncleanness out of you. 16 And you shall be profaned by your own doing in the sight of the nations, and you shall know that I am the LORD.” 17 And the word of the LORD came to me: 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 dross of silver. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20 As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. 21 I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it. 22 As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD; I have poured out my wrath upon you.” 23 And the word of the LORD came to me: 24 “Son of man, say to her, You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation. 25 The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. 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 common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. 27 Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. 28 And 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. 29 The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice. 30 And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for

**the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. 31 Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord GOD.”**

This chapter consists of three separate oracles: (1) 22:1–16; (2) 22:17–22; and (3) 22:23–31. The same word-event formula, “the Word of Yahweh came to me,” introduces each of the three oracles, since it is repeated in 22:1, 17, 23. Comparably, the recognition formula, “you will know that I am Yahweh,” concludes the first oracle (22:16) and a variation of it concludes the second oracle (22:22). The signatory formula, “says the Lord Yahweh,” ends 22:31 and closes the chapter. (CC)

Formally, the three oracles are addressed to different audiences, although in reality they are identical: (1) the bloody city; (2) the house of Israel; and (3) the unclean land. The themes of the three are similar, but with different approaches or metaphors: (1) a general indictment of Jerusalem for a great variety of moral and ceremonial violations; (2) the use of metallurgical imagery to describe “the house of Israel” (22:18) as all dross that must be purged in the fire of judgment; and (3) the offenses of all classes of Israelite society. (CC)

**22:1–16** Nebuchadnezzar was about to besiege Jerusalem, which would result in a great slaughter of its citizens and reduce every structure to rubble (21:14, 27). God made it clear that He decreed the horrors of war and the defeat of Jerusalem. Acting as God’s prosecuting attorney, Ezekiel hauled the inhabitants of Jerusalem into court, indicting them for committing abominable deeds. (TLSB)

**22:2** *bloody city?* Jerusalem is as infamous in God’s sight as Nineveh, the notoriously wicked capital of Assyria, against which the prophet Nahum uttered the execration, “Woe to the bloody city” (Na 3:1). The crimes committed in Jerusalem are so heinous that the charge of shedding blood is repeated six times in the next 11 verses. (TLSB)

**22:3** *sheds blood ... making idols.* Two categories of sins are developed: social injustices and idol worship. (CSB)

**22:4** *appointed time.* God planned Jerusalem’s downfall. (TLSB)

**22:6** *princes of Israel.* Leaders generally, not kings; contrast 21:12 with 19:1. (CSB)

**22:7–12** *treated with contempt.* Legislation, well known to the accused, prohibited the wrongs enumerated here. (TLSB)

**22:8** *Sabbaths.* A major concern in Ezekiel. (CSB)

*eat on the mountain...commit lewdness.* Eat on the mountains” (Ezek 22:9) undoubtedly refers to participation in pagan ritual meals on the high places. This was already condemned in 18:6. The connection with sexual debauchery is now quite clear: the apparently orgiastic character of the pagan rituals. (CC)

**22:13** *strike my hand.* In anger (see 21:14, 17). (CSB)

To express aroused feelings of indignation. (TLSB)

**22:14** *Can your courage endure.* Until now they had put on a bold, brazen front, confident that the Lord could not destroy the Holy City. (Cf Jer 7:4.) (TLSB)

**22:15** *scatter.* Exile. (TLSB)

*consume your uncleanness.* The walls of Jerusalem will not offer them security. For God will turn the city, filled with refugees, into a smelting furnace in which the fire of His wrath will melt them into a heap of slag. (TLSB)

**22:18** *dross.*† For references to Jerusalem as a furnace see Isa 1:21–26; Jer 6:27–30. Israel is like ores which when melted down leave no residue of silver but only worthless dross. (CSB)

Israel is like ore that when melted down leaves no valuable residue of silver, but only worthless dross. (TLSB)

**22:20** *blow the fire.* Heat intensified by bellows. (TLSB)

**22:24** *not ... rained upon.* If not blessed by rainfall, a land is a worthless desert, unable to sustain life (cf Jer 14:2–6). (TLSB)

**22:25** *priophets.* Ezekiel begins to speak plainly concerning the “dross” of vv. 18–22. All of Jerusalem’s leaders and people were included: princes (here), priests (v. 26), officials (v. 27), prophets (v. 28), people (v. 29). (CSB)

False prophets would encourage members of the royal family to commit the crimes. (TLSB)

**22:26** *distinguish between the holy and the common.* The main duty of priests. (CSB)

**22:27** *princes ... like wolves.* They are false shepherds (cf ch 34). *princes.* Hbr very likely refers to “high officials,” as in 1Ki 4:2. (TLSB)

**22:28** *whitewash.* To cover over the princes’ evil deeds. (TLSB)

A harsher assessment of the prophets is scarcely imaginable. The tone is very similar to Jeremiah’s in Jer 23:23–40. And we have heard almost exactly the same language earlier in Ezekiel 13: whitewashing the truth (13:10–16), giving lying visions and oracles (13:6–9), and perhaps most heinous of all, claiming to be speaking God’s Word when Yahweh has never been in communication with them (13:6–7). (CC)

**22:30** *stand in the breach.*† To intercede with God in behalf of the people was part of a prophet’s task (Ge 20:7; 1Sa 12:23; Jer 37:3; 42:2). (CSB)

A few righteous individuals such as Noah, Daniel, and Job would no longer avert the doom of a nation in which all strata of the citizenry were addicted to a wanton life of crime (14:13–14). E.g., Jeremiah was sent to preach repentance but was rebuffed, ridiculed, and persecuted. “Such prayer, then, is to be our protection and defense now.... Let them all rage and attempt their utmost and deliberate and resolve how they may suppress and exterminate us, so that their will and counsel may prevail. Over and against this one or two Christians with this petition alone shall be our wall [Ezekiel 22:30], against which they shall run and dash themselves to pieces” (LC III 69). (TLSB)

**22:31** *I have returned their way upon their heads.* They will suffer the abuse they heaped on others. (CSB)

**Ch 22** Like a prosecuting attorney, Ezekiel presents God’s charges against Judah. He outlines Judah’s total disregard of God’s Laws presented at Mount Sinai. Above all else, Judah has forgotten her Lord (v 12). Through the suffering of the exiles, the Lord would lead His people to repentance and ultimately forgiveness. He still works this way in our lives today, ever seeking our good and salvation. • Lord, our sins are above counting. Forgive us, we pray, through Christ. Amen. (TLSB)