

LONG OUTLINE EZEKIEL CHAPTER 22: THREE ORACLES OF CONDEMNATION

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INTRODUCTION:

A. Historical context

- a. Before the fall of Jerusalem, which seemed inevitable given all that Ezekiel has been saying up to this point. Note last chapter—21.31: “I will
 - i. pour out My indignation on you;
 - ii. I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath,
 - iii. and I will give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction.
- b. Note the threefold three-fold summary in this chapter: “Thus
 - i. “I have poured out My indignation on them;
 - ii. I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath;
 - iii. their way I have brought upon their heads,” declares the Lord God

B. Theological context

- a. The history from the Exodus to Ezekiel’s time has been one of disobedience to the covenant and threats of destruction of the nation.
- b. This chapter is very similar to chapters 13, 18.
- c. Ezekiel enumerates yet again the sins of the people.
 - i. Remember that at the end of chapter 20.49 [Heb 21.5] we find an exasperated Ezekiel telling the Lord that the people who hear his judgements think that Ezekiel is just speaking in riddles [*mashal*, parable].
 - ii. In this chapter Ezekiel is making it clear that he is *NOT* speaking in riddles but in real-time truth.

C. Not related to Ezekiel, but remember that tonite begins the eight-day Festival of Lights, or Hanukkah (also Chanukah) for our Jewish friends.

CHAPTER 22: DETAILS

1. Usual beginning for an oracle: “The word of the Lord came to me saying...” (First oracle)

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EXCURSUS-1

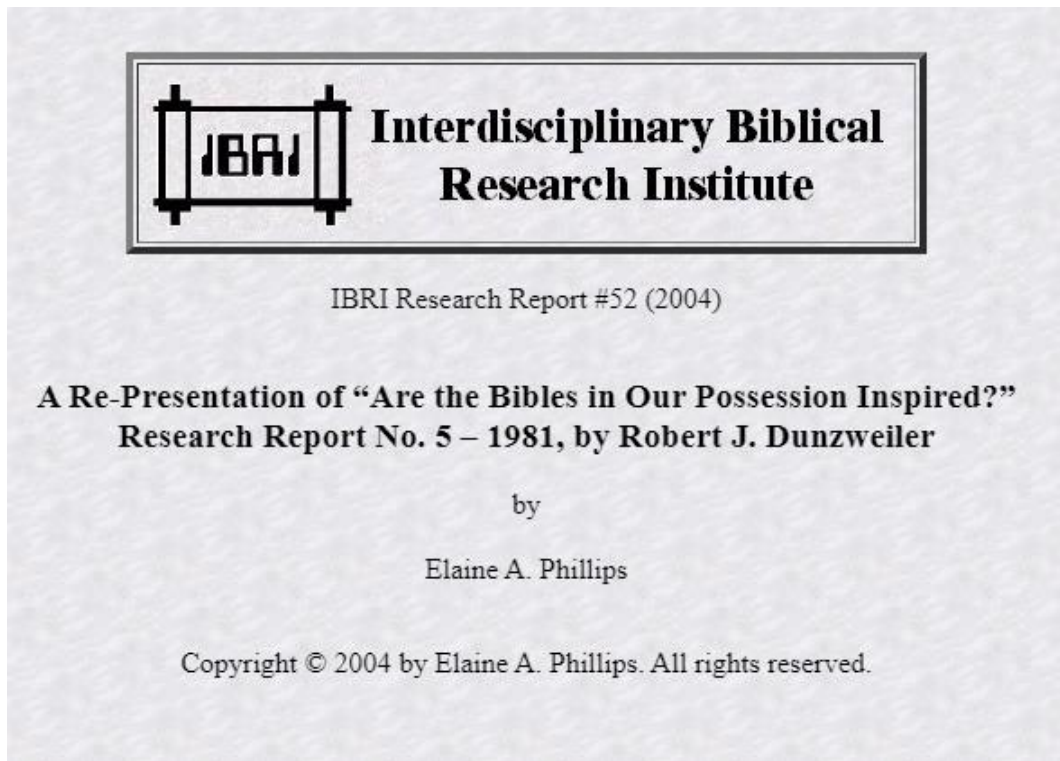
A. “The word of the Lord came to me”

- a. Prophets of old spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1.21)
- b. In other words, the prophets’ words were *inspired* by God (2 Tim 3.16). [Note: The word “inspired” in Greek is *θεόπνευστος*, which literally means “God-breathed.”
- c. A working definition of “inspired”:

Inspiration is a special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the books of sacred Scripture, so that their words should convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, should bear a proper relationship to the thoughts of the other books of Scripture, and should be kept free from error in thought, fact, doctrine and judgment. (Attributed to A. A. MacRae and to R. J. Dunzweiler, Biblical Theological Seminary)

- B. Recommended further reading on “inspiration” and its relationship to our present Bibles.

For this, see the article by Elaine Phillips online at <https://ibri.org/RRs/RR052/52EPhillips.htm>



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2. Repetition of “Will you judge, will you judge.”
- a. Same as 20.4. There it is addressed to the leaders, here to the whole nation.
 - b. Since this is what is called a “judgement” passage [in the sense of being charged in a court of law], D. Block suggests translating this as ““Will you not arraign them, will you not arraign them!”
 - c. Jerusalem called “a bloody city.”
 - a. Same terminology that Nahum used against Nineveh (Nah 3.1)

- b. Literally, “city of bloods,” implying lots of bloodshed.
- c. First time this expression is used by Ezekiel. In 7.23 Ezek uses the phrase “full of bloody justice” and “full of violence; in 9.9 he uses “filled w/ bloodshed.”
- d. Innocent blood: Manasseh (2 Kgs 21.16) Also Amon; Jehoiakim.

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EXCURSUS-2

A. The role of Jerusalem

- a. Both political and religious capital of Israel.
- b. Conquered by David (2 Sam 5; 1 Chr 11)
- c. David brought the ark there (2 Sam 6)
- d. David wanted to erect the temple there, but the Lord told him his son Solomon would build, which he did (1 Kgs 6)
- e. Became “the center of the earth” (Ezek 5.5)—the place the Lord chose to set his name (1 Kgs 9.3 and many other places).
- f. By Ezekiel's time, it had been profaned to the point that the Lord’s glory departed (Ezek 10).
- g. The only way to recover the sanctity of the temple was to destroy it and start anew.

B. The bloodguilt of Jerusalem

- a. Ezek 22 expresses this. Bloodguilt that cannot be cleansed short of destruction and exile
 - i. Dt 19.10: “So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and guilt for bloodshed will not be on you.”
 - ii. Lev 17.11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood.” As such, there was a special reverence even for animals as well as for people. The blood of an animal was to drained before eating it (17.13).
 - iii. Innocent blood polluted the land. (Dt 21 for a slain body found in a field.)
- b. The stain of Jerusalem’s bloodshed could not be removed on its own. Remember Lady Macbeth!

C. The point is “radical holiness” (Duguid) was required of its inhabitants (Ps 24.3). Quite the opposite had occurred. The entirely *holy city* had become the entirely *unholy city*.

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3. Two main sins: *social* (bloodshed) and *cultic* (idols).

- a. Was there a connection between shedding blood and idolatry?
- b. Think Molech and others (2 Kgs 17.30-31; 23.10; Jer 32.35)

4. *Bloodshed* leads to *guilt* that leads to *punishment*, and the *idols* leads to *defilement* that leads to *unfitness* to be in the presence of a holy God.

- a. Note the repeat in vs. 4 of *bloodshed* and *idolatry*.
 - b. Many subcategories for both social and for cultic sins listed below (vss. 6-12).
 - c. "You have brought your day near and have come to your years." I.e., "Time's up!"
 - d. The nations will mock and reproach => how "nothing" Israel will become (Cf. Dt 28.64-67).
5. Judgement will come upon Jerusalem and nations near and far will partake and mock Israel to boot. Mention here of the nations *near and far* is a *merism*. Another way of saying "all the lands" in vs. 4.
6. Clearly, the leaders [*nasi*] have led the people astray. Apparently, they have persuaded the people to follow their evil example!
- a. Vs. begins w/ "behold" as w/ vs. 13. Note the parallelism: *Behold the sins; behold the judgements*.
 - b. Leaders of Israel singled out since they were the ones that were supposed to protect the populace, not prey on them
 - c. Solomon's psalm Ps 72.1-4:

¹ Give the king Your judgments, God,
 And Your righteousness to the king's son.
² May he judge Your people with righteousness
 And Your afflicted with justice.
³ May the mountains bring peace to the people,
 And the hills, in righteousness.
⁴ May he vindicate the afflicted of the people,
 Save the children of the needy,
 And crush the oppressor.

- d. Unfortunately, the leaders had become crushing oppressors themselves!
- 7 – 12: Ezekiel reveals the sins of the people
- a. Reference to Holiness Code (Lev 18-20, 25) shows Ezekiel's priestly background.
 - b. The sins enumerated are:
 - 1. Contemptuous treatment of father and mother (Lev 20.9)
 - 2. Despising holy things and desecrating the Sabbath (Lev 19.30)
 - 3. Oppressing the alien (19.33);
 - 4. Slandering (19.16);
 - 5. Eating at mt. shrines (19.26 LXX)
 - 1) Heb "You shall not eat *on the blood*."
 - 2) LXX "*on the mountains*" implying a prohibition against idolatry.
 - 6. Lewd acts (20.14);
 - 7. Dishonoring father's bed (20.11);
 - 8. Violating women during menstruation (18.19)
 - 9. Adultery (20.10);

- 10. Defiling daughter-in-law (21.12);
- 11. Violating sister (20.17);
- 12. Usury and interest (25.36);
- 13. Unjust gain from neighbor (19.13)
- c. This whole list of condemnations ends w/
 - “‘YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN ME,’ says the Lord God.”
- 13. God will “smite (strike) his hands” against the dishonest gain from bloodshed. “Strike hands” probably an expression of anger. (Cf. 6.11; 21.14, 17) Like striking one’s fist on the palm and exclaiming, “You deserve this!”
- 14. The people cannot resist the Lord’s judgement.
- 15. The dispersal amongst the nations will purge the people of their uncleanness. We’ve seen this before (Ezek 12.15; 20.23; 36.19).
- 16. “You will profane *yourself*...”
 - a. Some MSS have “profane *me*.”
 - b. But how does the nation profane itself?
 - Ex. Dt 4.27-28: “²⁷ The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord drives you.
 - ²⁸ There you will serve gods, the work of human hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear, nor eat nor smell anything.”
 - c. In other words, “Have at it [i.e., all your profane practices] in exile.” (Note Rom 1.24ff)
 - d. LXX: “And I will give heritages in thee in the sight of the nations, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” Follows Mic 5.7.
- 17. The word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel (Second oracle). This is a parable of sorts, but not officially called that.
- 18 – 22: The smelter: The image in vss. 13-16 was scattering. In vss. 17-22 it’s the polar opposite: *gathering* into a smelter.
 - a. Explain the smelting process
 - b. But not a gathering for good as seen previously (cf. vs. 19)
 - c. Gather in Jerusalem=> bulging population when the attack begins => famine, plague, death.
 - d. Note other references to the smelting process re: Israel:
 - 1) Dt 4.20: “But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the *iron furnace*, from Egypt, to be a people of His own possession, as today.”
 - 2) 1 Kgs 8.51: “For they are Your people and Your inheritance which You have brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the *iron furnace*.”
 - 3) Jer 11.4: “I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the *iron furnace*, saying, ‘Listen to My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God.’”
 - f. Generally, after scattering for cleansing, the Lord will gather in his mercy (Ezek 11.17; 20.34). Here it is part of the refining process and seen as punishment. Other

gatherings for blessing are: Jer 23.3; 29.14; 31.8, 10.32-37; 49.5; Ezek 20.41; 28.25; 29.13; 34.13; 36.24; 37.21; 38.8; 39.27.

- f. Vss. 20-21: Jerusalem will be hell as described in Dt 28.52-57. The situation at present is hopeless, but Ezek is careful to give hope later on Chaps. 35 – 37. (Note also Jeremiah's ministry 1.9c – 10.)
- g. Finally, note the importance of silver as the "coin of exchange" during this time.
- h. This section ends w/ the recognition formula: "You will know that I am the Lord."

23. The word of the Lord comes again to Ezekiel (Third oracle)

24. A land not cleansed or rained on

- a. Note the rain cycles in Israel
- b. The early rain clears the air of dust, but not in this case.
- c. Withholding rain as judgement Dt 11, esp. vss 11, 14, 17; Dt 28.24: "The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed."
- d. These are *torrential rains* to cleans the land à la the Flood. Ezek uses the same metaphor in 13.11, 13:

¹¹ "A flooding rain will come, and you, hailstones, will fall, and a violent wind will break out."

¹³ "Therefore, this is what the Lord God says: 'I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume it in wrath.'" (Cp. 38.22)

25. Here Ezekiel begins his enumeration of the sins of the various leaders of the people:

- a. Prophets, priests, princes, officials, "people of the land."
- b. The **PROPHETS**—we have seen this before—pretend to have a message from the Lord, and that gives the patina of authenticity. After all, how can you argue w/ "The Lord told me...?"
- c. Note the LXX has "ἀφηγούμενοι" [more like a military leader] and some scholars go along w/ this since prophets are mentioned below (vs. 28). If this is the reading, then we have five categories of miscreants: leaders, priests, prophets, princes, people of the land. But perhaps Ezek is bringing up the prophets twice for emphasis.
- d. Ezekiel is following (or is parallel to) Zeph 3.3-4 that nicely summarizes the categories of leaders and their sins:

³ Her leaders within her are roaring lions,
Her judges are wolves at evening;
They have no bones to gnaw in the morning.

⁴ Her prophets are insolent, treacherous men;
Her priests have profaned the sanctuary.
They have done violence to the Law."

Ezekiel adds “people of the land.”

26. The **PRIESTS** have defiled the temple, the holy things, the Sabbaths, and do not rebuke the populace on their immorality as described in vss. 7 – 11.

- a. The priests themselves are defying the Holiness Code that they should be teaching and upholding.
- b. The job of the priest: Malachi 2:7:

“For the lips of a priest should maintain knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of armies.”

- c. But they did not do their job. Malachi continues (vss. 8-9):

⁸ “But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have ruined the covenant of Levi,” says the Lord of armies. ⁹ “So I also have made you despised and of low reputation in the view of all the people, since you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the.”

- d. Note that we are a royal priesthood, which gives us responsibilities to be good messengers (1 Pet 1.9).

27. The **PRINCES** [Heb *sar*, not *nasi*] abuse their power.

- a. Like wolves tearing prey
- b. Shed blood for dishonest gain

28. The **PROPHETS**

- a. “Smear whitewash for miscreants.” I.e., cover for the misdeeds of the above by claiming to have a message from the Lord that all is OK.
- b. We’ve discussed whitewash before in chapter 13.

29. **PEOPLE OF THE LAND**

- a. Land owners? (Stuart)
- b. They are in cahoots w/ the ruling social order (i.e., the elites) that can do what they wish w/ impunity. Where’s there no law, there is oppression of the weak by the strong.

30. God searches for an intercessor, but there are none!

- a. Examples of intercession:
 - 1) Moses (Ex 32.31; Ps 106.23)
 - 2) Xns as intercessors (1 Tim 2.1, 2; Jas 5.14 – 16; Eph 6.18)
- b. Greatest intercessors: Jesus (Rom 8.24; Heb 7.25) and the Holy Spirit (Rom 8.26, 27).

31. Summary of what the Lord is going to do—and imminently! Note the three-fold summary in this chapter:

“THUS

1. I have poured out My indignation on them [*prophetic perfect*—as good as done!]
 2. I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath;
 3. their way I have brought upon their heads,”
- DECLARES THE LORD GOD.”

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COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

- A. “A society that thrives on violence not only self-destructs but will also have to contend w/ God” (D. Block).
 1. All humans are created in God’s image, so murder is a destruction of that image. Let’s not forget that in spite of the fall, the image remains in humans. (Cf. Jas 3.9: “With it [tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, who have been made in the likeness of God.”)
 2. How many “bloody cities” do we have in MA? USA? World?
 3. What are some of the “bloody acts?”
- B. Leaders are responsible to the Lord for the execution of their duties.
 1. Note the duties of the king (Dt. 17.14-20)
 2. Paul brings out the duties of the magistrate as well as the duties of the citizenry (Rom 13.3-6)
 - a. Not a cause of fear for good behavior but [a cause of fear] for bad behavior
 - b. Are supposed to praise good behavior on the part of its citizens
 - c. Brings wrath on those practicing evil
 - d. We pay taxes so leader can devote themselves to “this very thing” (i.e., to a-c above).
 - e. “Power corrupts....” To often it’s “My kingdom come” rather than “Thy kingdom come.”
 - f. What is the ultimate authority in the US?
- C. We see the following institutions in Ezekiel 22: prophet, priest, king (or leaders and their bureaucrat toadies), princes, land owners.
 1. What are the current parallels to these offices in our country?
 2. In what way are they abusing their power?
- D. Ezekiel and the other prophets continue to refer to the Mosaic Law (or more specifically, in Ezekiel’s case, the Holiness Code) to show how far short of God’s standard the people have become.
 1. In our church, to what standard should we refer to help congregants consider how short we have fallen from the expectations of the God of Hosts?
 2. What about the general society: To what standard does one refer to help people realize their (our) shortcomings before God?

3. Ezekiel made it clear that God puts up w/ sin only so long. This is true today as it was in the past. (God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.)
 - a. How can we bring this message to today's society?
 - b. Can we use some of the "street theatre" techniques of Ezekiel in a technological age?
- E. How do we—small cogs in an enormous wheel—"stand in the breach?"