3. The idolatrous rulers of Judah ch. 22

God then asked Ezekiel to "judge the 'bloody city.'" The judgment is to "cause her to know her abominations" (vv. 1-2). First, the city was murderous, many times killing the innocent. Secondly, they made idols that defiled them. So, God made them a reproach to those around them and those also mocked them (vv. 1-5).

The rulers of Israel are accused of using their power to have people killed, not showing respect to parents, treating those from other countries in their midst poorly, and abusing the orphans and widows. Religiously, the had despised God's "holy things" and profaned the sabbath. Slanderous men had killed people, been involved in pagan worship, and been involved in lewdness. This included adultery, and incest. Sexual intercourse was seen as an expression of worship. They took bribes to kill, took interest and profits from fellow Jews, and had totally forgotten God (vv. 6-12).

> "15 I will scatter you among the nations and I will disperse you through the lands, and I will consume your uncleanness from you. 16 You will profane yourself in the sight of the nations, and you will know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 22:15-16). God will now act in judgment. He will scatter them among the nations (vv. 15-16).

Tom Constables writes, "Accusation marks the preceding oracle, and judgment marks this one. 22:17–20 The Lord also compared the present Judahites to the base metals (bronze, tin, iron, and lead) that separate from silver in the refining process. He planned to gather them in Jerusalem, His crucible, and subject them to a trial by fire, like refiners do in order to extract any remaining silver from the dross (cf. Isa. 1:22–25; 48:10; Jer. 6:27–30; 9:7; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2–4). Punishment for sin involves three major things: retribution, correction, and purification. Here purification is in view. 22:21–22 God's wrath would be the fire that He would blow on the people, and they would melt, like when a silversmith refines silver (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9–14; Rev. 20:15). They would then know that Yahweh had judged them. The Babylonians really did burn the city, so this turned out to be a literal fire as well as a metaphorical one. This smelting process was experienced by Israel in the last siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans."[1]

The prophets have conspired against the people, the priest have done violence to the Law, profaned holy things, not taught the difference in profane and holy or clean and unclean ignored the sabbath, and profaned God. The princes (kings, leaders) have killed people to take what they have. And the prophets have lied to them that everything was going to be alright through false visions and divining lies when God had not spoken through them. Of course, the people as a whole weren't much better. They had practiced oppression, committed robbery, and oppressed the sojourners without justice. He closes with judgment:

> 30 I searched for a man among them who would stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one. 31 Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord God (Ezek. 22:30-31).

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[1] Constable, ibid., Eze 22:17-21.

4. The parable of the two sisters ch. 23

In chapter 16, the emphasis was upon Israel's religious adultery. Here in chapter 23, the emphasis is upon her political prostitution. She is represented as a nation always seeking to allure the other nations to love her so that she might reap the benefits of those relationships. Yet all the time she is intimate with them, she really despises them.

Identification of the Figures (23:1-4). The two sister are Samaria and Jerusalem. They had one mother, that is, these two nations split from the united nation. Samaria was named Oholah, meaning "tent woman" which may refer to her use of religious shrines. …. Judah, Oholibah, which means "my tent is in her" [which] seems to have direct reference to the temple. … Samaria was the eldest or greatest, and Judah was the youngest or smallest…. Both spiritually had immoral sexual relationship with Egypt in their youth. … in Egypt, these two nations learned to be prostitutes, seeking other nations as lovers and giving themselves to them (cf. v. 8; Ezek. 16:26; Joshua 24:14; Num. 25:3-9; 1 Kings 21:15; Amos 5:25-26).[2]

Samaria's Prostitution (23:5-10). Israel played the harlot with the Assyrians. Israel sought political advantages as well as worshipping Assyria's gods. So, in 722BC, God gave Israel into the hands of the Assyrians. Samaria became a byword for an immoral nation.

Jerusalem's prostitution (23:11-35). Jerusalem became even worse than Samaria. She committed spiritual harlotry with both Assyria (cf. Ahaz, 2 Kings 16) and Babylon (cf. Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20; Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, 2 Kings 23; and Zedekiah, 2 Kings 24; Jer. 29).

Jerusalem is seen as a body being taken apart piece by piece (vv. 23-35). The remains of the body is consumed by fire and the sword, as would be true in 586BC. And she would be left desolate. Yahweh declared in verse 35: "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, bear now the punishment of our lewdness."

He then summarizes the entire chapter in vv. 36-49. They had committed adultery with pagan idols, murdered, burned their children, defiled God's temple, profaned the Sabbaths, sacrificed their sons, sought security not in Yahweh but through alliances with pagan nations. So, as spiritually adulterous nations, they received the penalty of an adulterer (v. 47; Deut. 22:21-22). Jerusalem's inhabitants would be cast down, stoned, robbed, killed with the sword, and her houses burned. God's goal for the judgment is stated in the last part of verses 49, "thus you will know that I am the Lord God."

[2] Alexander, ibid., 72-73.