Ezekiel 22

No One in the Gap: The Bloody City and the Furnace

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Jerusalem had forgotten God, and everything else came apart — families, courts, worship, money, leadership. From the palace to the pulpit to the street, no one was clean. God was ready to melt the whole city in His furnace, and the saddest line in the chapter is that He looked for one man to stand in the gap and found none.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 22 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | Amber Time / place / contrast

1 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge ⚠ the bloody city? yea, Green thou shalt shew her all her abominations.

3 Then say thou, ▲ Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city ⚠ sheddeth blood ⇄ in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself.

4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries.

5 Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.

6 Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to ⇄ shed blood.

7 In thee have they ⚠ set light by father and mother: ⇄ in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed ⚠ the fatherless and the widow.

8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast ⚠ profaned my sabbaths.

9 In thee are men that carry tales to ⇄ shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: ⇄ in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.

11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

12 In thee have they taken gifts to ⇄ shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and ⚠ hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.

13 Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy ⇄ dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been ⇄ in the midst of thee.

14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? ▲ I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it.

15 And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and ★ will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

16 And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and ▲ thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

17 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become ⇄ dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, ⇄ in the midst of the furnace; they are even the ⇄ dross of silver.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become ⇄ dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

20 As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you.

21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted ⇄ in the midst thereof.

22 As silver is melted ⇄ in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted ⇄ in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have ▲ poured out my fury upon you.

23 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in ◷ the day of indignation.

25 There is ⚠ a conspiracy of her prophets ⇄ in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows ⇄ in the midst thereof.

26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have ⚠ put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27 Her princes ⇄ in the midst thereof are ⚠ like wolves ravening the prey, to ⇄ shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get ⇄ dishonest gain.

28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered morter, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, ⚠ when the LORD hath not spoken.

29 The people of the land have used oppression , and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

30 And ▲ I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and ▮▮ stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: ◷ but I found none.

31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

Marked in the text

- **v2** ⚠ the bloody city
- **v2** ▮▮ thou shalt shew her all her abominations
- **v3** ▲ Thus saith the Lord GOD
- **v3** ⇄ in the midst *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** ⚠ sheddeth blood
- **v6** ⇄ shed blood *(every occurrence)*
- **v7** ⚠ set light by father and mother
- **v7** ⚠ the fatherless and the widow
- **v8** ⚠ profaned my sabbaths
- **v12** ⚠ hast forgotten me
- **v13** ⇄ dishonest gain *(every occurrence)*
- **v14** ▲ I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it
- **v15** ★ will consume thy filthiness out of thee
- **v16** ▲ thou shalt know that I am the LORD
- **v18** ⇄ dross *(every occurrence)*
- **v18** ◷ in the midst of the furnace
- **v22** ▲ poured out my fury upon you
- **v24** ◷ the day of indignation
- **v25** ⚠ a conspiracy of her prophets
- **v26** ⚠ put no difference between the holy and profane
- **v27** ⚠ like wolves ravening the prey
- **v28** ⚠ when the LORD hath not spoken
- **v30** ▲ I sought for a man among them
- **v30** ▮▮ stand in the gap
- **v30** ◷ but I found none

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 22:3 (KJV)

3 Then say thou, ▲ Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city ⚠ sheddeth blood ⇄ in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself.

Setting

Ezekiel is among the exiles in Babylon. This chapter carries no date of its own; it belongs to the run of messages that began "in the seventh year" (20:1), about 591 B.C., during the reign of Zedekiah, Judah's last king. Jerusalem is still standing, and many there believe it cannot fall. Within a few years Nebuchadnezzar's army will lay siege to it (24:1–2). The chapter holds three messages, each opening with "the word of the LORD came" (vv1, 17, 23).

Structure

- vv1–5 — **the bloody city:** "will you judge the bloody city? Then cause her to know all her abominations" (v2). She is "a city shedding blood in her midst" (v3). "You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed" (v4), and the nations near and far will mock her (vv4–5).
- vv6–12 — **the charge sheet:** "the rulers of Israel, each according to his power," have shed blood (v6). "They have treated father and mother lightly within you," oppressed the alien, and wronged "the fatherless and the widow" (v7). "You have despised My holy things and profaned My sabbaths" (v8). Slander, idol feasts, incest and adultery (vv9–11), bribes, interest and extortion (v12) — and beneath them all, "you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord GOD (v12).
- vv13–16 — **God strikes His hand:** "I smite My hand at your dishonest gain" (v13). "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I will deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken and will act" (v14). He will scatter them among the nations, and "I will consume your uncleanness from you" (v15).
- vv17–22 — **the furnace:** "the house of Israel has become dross to Me" (v18). "Because all of you have become dross" (v19), God will gather them into Jerusalem like metal into a furnace and melt them (vv19–21), and "you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath on you" (v22).
- vv23–29 — **every class corrupt:** "a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation" (v24). Prophets "like a roaring lion tearing the prey" (v25). "Her priests have done violence to My law" and made "no distinction between the holy and the profane" (v26). Princes "like wolves tearing the prey" (v27). Prophets who "smeared whitewash for them," saying "Thus says the Lord GOD," "when the LORD has not spoken" (v28). And "the people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery" (v29).

- vv30–31 — **no one in the gap:** "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one" (v30). So "I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads" (v31).

Repeated words

blood / bloody / bloodshed (vv2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 27); in you / within you / among you (vv6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13); profane (vv8, 16, 26); dross (vv18, 19); furnace (vv18, 20, 22); gather (vv19, 20, 21); melt (vv20, 21, 22); wrath (vv20, 21, 22, 31); indignation (vv24, 31); prey (vv25, 27); lives (vv25, 27).

Contrasts

the holy city (Isa 52:1) ⟷ "the bloody city" (v2). Princes who should protect the weak ⟷ princes who shed blood "each according to his power" (v6). Silver ⟷ dross (v18). Prophets who say "Thus says the Lord GOD" ⟷ "the LORD has not spoken" (v28). The holy ⟷ the profane, the unclean ⟷ the clean (v26). A whole nation searched ⟷ "I found no one" (v30).

Chapter theme (my words)

Jerusalem had forgotten God, and everything else came apart — families, courts, worship, money, leadership. From the palace to the pulpit to the street, no one was clean. God was ready to melt the whole city in His furnace, and the saddest line in the chapter is that He looked for one man to stand in the gap and found none.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 22:30 (KJV)

30 And ▲ I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and 📖 stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: ⏱ but I found none.

The bloody city (vv1–5)

God asks Ezekiel to act as prosecutor — to "judge" Jerusalem by making her know her abominations. Block, quoted by Guzik, notes that Ezekiel seems to have borrowed the phrase "bloody city" from Nahum's description of Nineveh (Nah 3:1); Guzik: "Jerusalem seemed as bad as Nineveh!" Feinberg, quoted by Guzik, says the plural form of "blood" "points to numerous acts of bloodshed." Jerusalem had the Word, the prophets and the temple, so she was held to a higher standard than the nations — who would now mock her.

The charge sheet (vv6–12)

The northern kingdom had fallen over a century earlier, yet God still calls Judah's leaders "the rulers of Israel." They used power to kill — Feinberg, in Guzik, speaks of judicial murders, citing 2 Kgs 21:16 and 24:4 — the innocent blood Manasseh shed. The list walks through the Ten Commandments: parents dishonored (Exod 20:12), the alien, orphan and widow crushed (Exod 22:21–22), holy things and

sabbaths despised, idols on the mountains, adultery and incest (Lev 18; 20), bribes and interest charged to a brother (Exod 22:25; Deut 23:19). Wiersbe, in Guzik, notes that honoring parents carried the promise of long life in the land — and now Judah would lose the land. Alexander, in Guzik, puts his finger on the root: "you have forgotten Me" (v12). Every broken relationship flowed from a broken relationship with God.

God's clenched hand (vv13–16)

Striking the hand was a gesture of anger and finality (see 21:17). God asks the princes whether their hearts can endure and their hands stay strong when He acts. Poole, in Guzik, calls the Babylonians God's "weapons of war." Scattering would purge the uncleanness from the land, and through judgment they would "know that I am the LORD" (v16). Trapp, in Guzik: "Thou shalt know me by my punishments."

The furnace (vv17–22)

Israel had been God's treasure; now she is dross — Block, in Guzik: "the waste produced in the extraction of silver from ore." When Babylon came, people fled into Jerusalem for safety, but they were being gathered into the furnace. Clarke, in Guzik: "the most violent must be resorted to," since milder means had failed. Yet Guzik finds hope even here: a refiner doesn't fire up the furnace for nothing — something precious is still in the ore. Morgan, in Guzik, says the fire is the only way the dross is destroyed and the silver recovered (compare Mal 3:2–3).

Every class guilty (vv23–29)

The land is "not cleansed or rained on" — no blessing, only drought and judgment. The prophets conspired like a roaring lion, devouring lives and wealth; Feinberg, in Guzik, says they were "directly responsible for the multiplication of widows" by urging war with false promises. The priests, whose job was to teach the difference between holy and common (Lev 10:10–11; Deut 33:10), stopped teaching it — and God Himself was profaned among them. The princes were wolves. The prophets whitewashed a cracked wall (13:10–16) with "Thus says the Lord GOD" when God had said nothing. And the ordinary people followed their leaders into oppression.

Standing in the gap (vv30–31)

The picture is a broken city wall with one soldier filling the breach. God sought an intercessor like Abraham (Gen 18:22–33) or Moses, who "stood in the breach before Him" (Ps 106:23) — and found none (compare Jer 5:1). Guzik says God still looks for such men, and the problem is how rare they are. Taylor, in Guzik, says a nation without godly leadership "must surely be on the way out." Guzik sees the final answer in Jesus — the one Man who stands in the gap and always lives to make intercession (Heb 7:25). Because no one stood, the wrath fell, and Judah reaped her own way.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **bloody / blood — *dam* (H1818):** blood, especially blood shed in violence; plural *damim*, bloodguilt.
- **abominations — *to'ebah* (H8441):** something detestable, especially idolatry.
- **become guilty — *'asham* (H816):** to offend, be guilty, bear guilt.
- **idols — *gillulim* (H1544):** idols — a contemptuous word, "dung-gods."
- **profane — *chalal* (H2490):** to pollute, treat as common.

- **forgotten — *shakach* (H7911):** to forget, ignore, cease to care.
- **dishonest gain — *betsaʿ* (H1215):** profit taken by violence or fraud.
- **interest — *neshek* (H5392):** interest on a loan; literally a "bite."
- **dross — *sig* (H5509):** the scum and slag skimmed off molten metal.
- **furnace — *kur* (H3564):** a smelting furnace.
- **melt — *natak* (H5413):** to pour out, melt.
- **wrath — *chemah* (H2534):** heat, burning anger.
- **indignation — *zaʿam* (H2195):** fury, God's settled anger against sin.
- **whitewash — *taphel* (H8602):** plaster, untempered mortar — a cover over a weak wall.
- **wall — *gader* (H1447):** a stone wall, fence.
- **gap — *perets* (H6556):** a breach, a break in a wall.

Cross-references

Gen 18:22–33; Exod 20:12; Exod 22:21–25; Exod 32:11–14; Lev 10:10–11; Lev 18:6–20; Deut 23:19; 2 Kgs 21:16; 2 Kgs 24:4; Ps 106:23; Isa 1:21–25; Jer 5:1; Ezek 13:10–16; Nah 3:1; Mal 3:2–3; Acts 7:52; 1 Tim 2:1–5; Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 1:6–7.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 22:2 (KJV)

2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge ⚠ the bloody city? yea, 📖 thou shalt shew her all her abominations.

Command to obey — "stand in the gap."

God was looking for one man (v30). I can't fix my nation, but I can stand in prayer for my family, my church and the men God has put in front of me. For a man fresh out of prison or newly sober, one brother who keeps praying for him by name may be the wall that holds. I'll keep a list and pray it.

Sin to confess — forgetting God

Under all of Jerusalem's sins sat one: "you have forgotten Me" (v12). My worst seasons didn't start with a big sin; they started when I let God slide to the edges. I'll confess where I've been busy with books, websites and work and have forgotten the Lord who gave them.

Warning to heed — whitewash

The prophets smeared whitewash on a cracked wall and called it peace (v28). It's easy to tell a struggling man what he wants to hear. In recovery work especially, cheap comfort kills. I need to speak truth in love — and refuse to say "Thus says the Lord" when the Lord has not spoken.

Promise to trust — the Refiner's fire

The furnace was judgment, but a refiner only fires up the furnace when there is silver in the ore (vv18–22; Mal 3:3). For the man whose life has melted down — arrest, divorce, relapse — God has not thrown him away. The fire is meant to burn off the dross, not the man (1 Pet 1:6–7).

Example to follow — the Man in the gap

No one stood in the gap in Ezekiel's day, but Jesus did. He stood between God's wrath and me, and He "always lives to make intercession" (Heb 7:25). I want to follow Him — to put myself between a hurting man and the enemy's lies, and to carry him to God in prayer.

Worship

The LORD has spoken and He will act. He sees every widow and orphan, every bribe and every lie. He is holy, and He will not be profaned forever. And He is the Refiner who sits by the fire, watching for His image in the silver.

Prayer

Lord GOD, I don't want to forget You. Search me and show me the dross. Keep me from whitewashing sin in myself or in the men I serve. Make me a man who builds up the wall and stands in the gap — for my home, my church and the men You have given me — and thank You that Jesus stands in the gap for me. Amen.