

# EZEKIEL

## *Cry Me a River*

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,  
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion  
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 22:1-31

Topic

If a wall is your defense, better scrutinize it for gaps.

Title

***"There's A Gap For That"***

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**If you know me at all, you know how much I enjoy doing maintenance around the house.**

If you don't believe me, stop by some time and I'll show you. In just about every room, as well as in the yard, you'll see all manner of *deferred maintenance*.

I am so good at it that I'm considering retiring as a Deferred Maintenance Man. My slogan will be, "Do you really need a garbage disposal?"

For over five millennia of human history, walls were essential for defense. Cities like Jericho, Babylon, Troy, and Gondor were noted for their seemingly impenetrable walls. Jerusalem was a walled city.

**Defensive walls must be maintained by inspecting for gaps and repairing them swiftly.**

The final Babylonian siege was upon the Jews. If ever there were a time to fill gaps it was now.

Not unexpectedly, in verse thirty Ezekiel records, "So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land..."

This imagery was common. But notice something as we read on. Babylon wasn't the invader. **It was the LORD!** "So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one."

Ezekiel was not talking about their stone & mortared wall. He was using the wall to represent a *spiritual* condition.

The Jews had 'built' a faulty religious wall by turning their backs to God. Their disobedience created significant gaps through which spiritual enemies had entered.

The gaps created by the Jews' negligence are a problem for us as well. I'll organize my comments around the three times Ezekiel said, "The Word of the LORD came to me," in verses 1, 17 & 23.

## **#1 Immorality Creates Gaps In Your Wall (v1-16)**

Have you ever heard someone say, "You can't legislate morality?" Frank Turek comments, "Legislating morality is not only biblical, it is a necessary responsibility of government."

### **The sad truth in America is that we have been legislating immorality.**

The Family Law Act of 1969 in California introduced no-fault divorce. Before that you had to prove wrongdoing.

God is on record that He hates divorce. He permits divorce & remarriage in certain circumstances, e.g., adultery and desertion. No-fault divorce legislated immorality. It opened up a moral gap that grows & grows. A scholarly paper in the University of Arkansas Law Review commented, "No-fault divorce proliferated; same-sex marriage evolved from nonmarital cohabitation and newly established status arrangements similar to marriage; assisted reproductive technology permitted parentage independent of marriage, sexual intercourse, and genetic connection; single persons, unmarried cohabitants, and same-sex couples could adopt children freely."

How do the godly stand in that gap? By honoring biblical marriage, for one. God hates divorce; you hate divorce along with Him. Remain married unless you have solid biblical grounds.<sup>1</sup> Marry wisely.

Ezk 22:1 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying...

God's Word comes to you in the Bible, interpreted and applied by God the Holy Spirit, who indwells you. Your part is to be *pre-submitted* to God's word.

Ezk 22:2 "Now, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Yes, show her all her abominations!

Cities adopt slogans. *What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas... Keep Austin Weird.*

### **Jerusalem in the 6<sup>th</sup> century was *The Bloody City*.**

"Blood" or "bloody" are used six times in this chapter. *Viva for Vice & Violence.*

Ezk 22:3 Then say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "The city sheds blood in her own midst, that her time may come; and she makes idols within herself to defile herself.

Ezk 22:4 You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and have defiled yourself with the idols which you have made...

Pagan religions incorporated rituals that involved self-inflicted cutting and bleeding. Shedding your own blood is idiotic. We need the blood of Jesus.

Another connection between blood and idolatry was the worship of Baal. It involved sacrificing infants. I don't need to tell you that our murder of infants is an **especially evil legislated immorality**.

Ezek 22:4...You have caused your days to draw near, and have come to *the end of* your years, therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all countries.

Ezk 22:5 Those near and *those* far from you will mock you as infamous *and* full of tumult.

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<sup>1</sup> Do not stay in an abusive relationship. It doesn't mean you can divorce immediately, but your safety is paramount. Call the police.

Their discipline was accelerated by their sin. In the NT the apostle Peter says that we can hasten the Lord's coming, not for discipline but deliverance (Second Peter 3:12). *He takes us home!*

Ezk 22:6 "Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you.

Ezk 22:7 In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow.

Laws protecting the most vulnerable were ignored. Lack of godly compassion and empathy is a gap.

Ezk 22:8 You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths.

Note the plural. There were other Sabbaths, e.g., every 7<sup>th</sup> year they were not to farm. Every 50<sup>th</sup> year was Jubilee with its many requirements.

Ezk 22:9 In you are men who slander to cause bloodshed; in you are those who eat on the mountains; in your midst they commit lewdness.

"Slander" can lead to bloodshed. There are those who cite the constant slander of President Trump as encouraging the assassination attempts.

The "mountains" were sites of idol worship, tied to fertility rituals involving sexual deviance.

Ezk 22:10 In you men uncover their fathers' nakedness...

Dr. Michael Heiser explains that "uncovering your father's nakedness" is a euphemism for sleeping with one's mother or stepmother, as seen by comparing Leviticus 18:6-8 and 20:11.

Ezk 22:10... in you they violate women who are set apart during their impurity.

Ezk 22:11 One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; and another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter.

It was like an event co-hosted by Sean Combs & Jefferey Epstein with Bill Cosby as the entertainer.

Ezk 22:12 In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase; you have made profit from your neighbors by extortion, and have forgotten Me," says the Lord GOD.

Sounds like the Mafia. Have you ever watched *Amish Mafia*? *It's so fake, it's funny.*

Ezk 22:13 "Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst.

Ezk 22:14 Can your heart endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken, and will do *it*.

Ezk 22:15 I will scatter you among the nations, disperse you throughout the countries, and remove your filthiness completely from you.

Ezk 22:16 You shall defile yourself in the sight of the nations; then you shall know that I *am* the LORD." ' ' "

Too harsh? Much of their behavior deserved capital punishment. Instead dispersion would ultimately "remove their filthiness." We can trust that there was no other way to bring them to repentance.

## **#2 Impurity Creates Gaps In Your Wall (v17-22)**

Looking down from Heaven, surrounded by its wall, Jerusalem looked like a crucible for heating metals. The LORD brought the heat and found only impurities in His people.

Ezk 22:17 The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezk 22:18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they *are* all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver.

Ezk 22:19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

Ezk 22:20 As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt *it*; so I will gather *you* in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave *you there* and melt you.

Ezk 22:21 Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst.

Ezk 22:22 As silver is melted in the midst of a furnace, so shall you be melted in its midst; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have poured out My fury on you.' "

Again I'd ask, "Is this too harsh? The LORD was trying to save them. He revealed their hearts. You won't confess & repent unless you see your sin.

Richard Baxter wrote, "See that your chief study be about your heart, that there God's image may be planted, and His interest advanced, and the interest of the world and flesh subdued, and the love of every sin cast out, and the love of holiness succeed."

Believers are familiar with trials being crucibles where Jesus refines us and we emerge as gold. Don't think it strange if you feel the heat. In fact, you should feel weird if you don't have any trials. Jesus said you *would* have tribulation.

### **#3 Indignation Closes Gaps In Your Wall (v23-31)**

We will twice encounter the word "indignation" in the remaining verses. God uses it to describe His attitude towards every segment of Judean society.

Ezk 22:23 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezk 22:24 "Son of man, say to her: 'You *are* a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.'

It is likely they had long been experiencing drought. It was a sign in the Law of Moses that the LORD was withholding blessings.

Ezk 22:25 The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.

There are predatory ministries & ministers. Grifting you isn't the worst of it. Their false teachings and heresies can keep a person from knowing Jesus.

Ezk 22:26 Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known *the difference* between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

The priests compromised, failing to teach or rebuke the people. Over time, this led to a complete loss of distinction between what was holy and what wasn't.

**It's been said, "You can take the Christian out of the world, but you can't take the world out of the Christian."**

Ezk 22:27 Her princes in her midst *are* like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain.

Princes were what we would call politicians. As Stan Lee used to quip, "*Nuff said.*"

Ezk 22:28 Her prophets plastered them with untempered *mortar*, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD had not spoken.

They were offering white-washed prophecies, in that they promised the LORD would repel the Babylonians for His names' sake.

Ezk 22:29 The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger.

This is a general statement that Jerusalem had become lawless. It was an undesirable place to live.

Ezk 22:30 So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.

Ezk 22:31 Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

God said He couldn't find anyone to make a wall and stand in the gap. That seems odd given prophets like Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Ezekiel. We know that Habakkuk interceded, and he did so literally from a tower on the actual wall.

One commentator said, "It wasn't that these men were deficient, but rather that the people were so thoroughly defiant." They did not want to be delivered. They would not follow a wall-building, gap-man.

A shadowy OT character, Balaam, was hired to curse God's people. Instead he finds himself blessing them! His advice to bring them down was "If you can't beat them, *join them!*"

Israel's enemy enticed them to sin, triggering the wrath of God upon His people.

**We defeat ourselves when we are content with white wash and and defer repairing tiny gaps in our walk.**

A.W. Tozer made this observation: *"Religion today is not transforming the people - it is being transformed by the people. It is not raising the moral level of society - it is descending to society's own level and congratulating itself that it has scored a victory because society is smiling accepting its surrender."*