

## How to Make a Wall • Ezekiel 22

### INTRODUCTION • Read vs. 30-31

1. V. 30 is quoted often and many sermons on prayer have used it as their text.
2. But what most messages on this v. leave out is its **context**; all that comes before it in ch. 22.
3. There God explains **why** Jerusalem is doomed, as He says in v. 31.
4. We'll end with v. 30 today, but we **need** to read the list of sins God spells out; their litany of wickedness that provoked His wrath.
5. We often hear that all sin is the same before God; that it's all wrong & deserving of judgment.
  - a. While it's true all sin is wrong and deserves to be punished,
  - b. It's NOT true it's all the same or all equally wicked.
  - c. Some sin is worse than others.
    - 1) Murder **is** worse than cheating on a quiz.
    - 2) Rooting for the SF Giants **is** worse than listening to country music.
  - d. Human courts weigh out more or less punishment based on the severity of the crime, because that's the just thing to do.
  - e. Do we think a human court is **more** just than God? That's silly!
  - f. No—there are some sins that are worse than others.
6. A list of especially grievous sins is given here; things so wrong they resulted in the death of a nation.
  - a. This is a portrait of a culture that has turned its back—on purpose—on God.
  - b. It knew what was right but made a conscious decision to go the other way.
  - c. And God says, when He finds these things in a society, its evidence of the end.
  - d. There's nothing left but judgment.

### Vs. 1-2

<sup>1</sup> Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Now, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Yes, show her all her abominations!

1. Ezekiel was to read this list of wickedness so people would know why they were being hammered.
  - a. It's a much longer passage than we usually cover on a Sunday, so I have to be brief.
  - b. I wish we could go into more depth, but can't due to time.

### The List • vs. 3-

<sup>3</sup> Then say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “The city sheds blood in her own midst, that her time may come;

1. It's a time, not of tranquility, but of widespread violence.
2. For any society to **thrive**, there must be **civil harmony**, peace, unity; a sense of **shared identity & purpose**.
3. That's what makes it **A Society**; not just a bunch of different groups.
4. They must see themselves as “A People.”
5. It's a sign of the **end** of a society when it's **fragmented** into warring camps, all after their own piece of the power-pie.
6. This is what comes of **multicultural pluralism**.
7. Despite the bumper sticker, people won't **COEXIST** because they're **selfish**.
8. Jerusalem had become a place of **frequent riots** when groups were upset about something.
9. It saw **regular violent protests**, w/crowds running amok, attacking whoever got in their way.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

and she makes idols within herself to defile herself.

1. This **explains** the violence & bloodshed that had become common.
2. For these idols were bloodthirsty & were worshipped by insanely abominable means.
  - a. Ritual abuse, self-mutilation, human sacrifice.
  - b. People were so numb to the hideous immorality associated w/them, the value of human life plummeted into the gutter.
  - c. Murder & mayhem weren't major crimes anymore; they were everyday occurrences.
  - d. Life became cheap.
3. In some circles, murder was a **rite of passage**; proof you had what it takes to be part of the group.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

<sup>4</sup> You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and have defiled yourself with the idols which you have made. 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. <sup>5</sup> Those near and *those* far from you will mock you as infamous *and* full of tumult.

1. Under Kings David & Solomon, Israel had been chief among the nations.
2. Foreign kings & queens traveled to Jerusalem to see if the reports of its glory were true. They went home knowing they were.
3. After her visit to Jerusalem, the Queen of Sheba said she'd only heard half the tale of its splendor.
4. But now, here at its end, Jerusalem is a pitiful & pathetic joke; a byword.
  - a. The once great city is a perfect example of the saying, "Behold how the mighty has fallen!"
  - b. No one visits it anymore. No one vacations there.
    - 1) It's too risky because of the violence and crime.
    - 2) Tourists are robbed. They end up dead; murdered and dropped in an alley.
    - 3) Travel agents around the world have thrown out the "Visit Jerusalem" brochures.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

1. Now God zeros in on the leaders of Jerusalem who've led the charge into judgment w/their wickedness.
- <sup>6</sup> "Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you.
2. Rather than use their influence to **unite** people & forge a real society,
  - a. They played to their political interests & divided people,
  - b. Setting them at odds with each other & stirring up strife.
  - c. All so they could retain political power.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

<sup>7</sup> In you they have made light of father and mother;

1. One of the 10 Commandments is to honor father & mother.
  - a. It's the bridge between the commands detailing our duty to God and our duty to other people.
  - b. Children **learn** to honor God Who they cannot see, by honoring the God-ordained authority of their parents they CAN see.
2. But the rulers used their authority to undermine parental authority.
3. They encourage children to disrespect & disobey their parents.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

4. HOW they did that 2500 years ago in Jerusalem we don't know, but we see how it's happening today.
  - a. Secular education experts tell teachers parents don't know how to raise children so it's up to the schools to raise them.
  - b. TV & radio pump a steady stream of propaganda at youth, telling them adults are idiots.
    - 1) Being a rebel is cool.
5. Every year at VBS has gotten harder dealing w/the disrespect children show adults.
  - a. This year was by far the worst.
  - b. The disrespect shown by some of the kids was blatant.
  - c. We had to tell several they couldn't come back because when confronted, instead of being contrite, they were **indignant** at being corrected.
6. We might read v. 7 here & say, "Hey, youth have always made light of mom & dad."
  - a. That's not so. History is clear on this
  - b. **Every** nation in its ascendancy, its rise to greatness, honors the authority of parents in the home.
  - c. Strong families make for a strong society because the family is the basic unit of society.
  - d. It's in the home that people learn the virtues that allow them to build a culture with the structure to prosper.
  - e. **BUT—every** civilization **falls** when that authority is upended & the family unravels.
7. This is listed as a serious sin that marks their end because **the rulers** undermined the authority **God** gave parents.
8. That's an insidious form of **blasphemy**.

in your midst they have oppressed the stranger;

1. Strangers were foreigners; non-citizens—people who for whatever reason found themselves living in the land.
2. Because they didn't have a voice or rights, they were vulnerable & those in positions of power took advantage of them.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

in you they have mistreated the fatherless [the orphan] and the widow.

1. They too have no voice; no power.
2. And because they couldn't do anything FOR the politicians, the politicians refused to hear them or protect them from those who were taking advantage of them.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

3. Today's politicians aren't **Public Servants**; they're **Power Savants**.
4. These last 2 sins; abuse of foreigners, orphans & widows—all mean God evaluates a society on how it treats the poor & powerless.
  - a. When leaders & rulers ARE servants who use their power & position to protect & provide for the truly needy, God blesses.
  - b. But when they **neglect** the needy, His wrath is **kindled**.
  - c. When they **go further** and **abuse** the poor & powerless, His wrath **boils over** in judgment.

<sup>8</sup> You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths.

1. They gave up all respect for the sacred.
2. There wasn't an inch in their hearts or minds for God.
3. In fact, it went further: They mocked any one or thing that **reminded** them of God.
  - a. They let the temple fall into disrepair.
  - b. They **ignored** the Sabbath; choosing instead to play sports & hold parties.
4. Slowly at first, but accelerating as the years passed, they removed the symbols & all traces of God.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

<sup>9</sup> In you are men who slander to cause bloodshed;

1. They concocted schemes to get rid of their opponents.
2. They bribed people to make false but damning accusations about their enemies.
3. In the firestorm of public opinion that followed, the accused were railroaded to execution or so humiliated they took their own life.

in you are those who eat on the mountains;

1. So!?! What's wrong with this?
2. Well—it was on the hilltops where they set up and worshipped the idols.
3. It used to be that they snuck up to these forbidden shrines, at night, when others wouldn't see.
4. But now—there's no shame in it anymore. Everyone does it at all hours; even in the middle of the day.
5. They even have *picnics* there!
6. They're so far gone, *they don't care* if anyone sees them committing their abominations.
7. What was once shameful is now celebrated in public. Let's have a parade!

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

in your midst [note that] they commit lewdness.

1. You see? There it is! There is now no restraint on sin.
2. What used to be shameful is now openly celebrated. People are *proud* of their *perversion*.
3. They think they have an enlightened attitude toward immorality.
  - a. Don't suppress your urges! That's unhealthy & harmful to your spirit.
  - b. Let your urges out! Pursue your desires.
  - c. Celebrate diversity! Do your own thing and don't let anyone tell you it's wrong.
  - d. The only *wrong* is to tell someone they are.

### SOUND FAMILIAR?

<sup>10</sup> In you men uncover their fathers' nakedness;

1. A euphemism for incest.

in you they violate women who are set apart during their impurity.

1. Men are so twisted & brutal, they *force* women into sex, regardless of their condition.
2. Like these guys we've heard about over the last few years who kidnap girls and women and keep them chained up for years as slaves to sate their sick-sick desires.

<sup>11</sup> One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife;

Adultery

another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; and another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter.

1. More incest.
2. *It's the words* "One" & "another," then "another" that clue us into what's happening.
3. This isn't some individual crime that comes to light that scandalizes & sickens the nation.
4. No—It's like this; "One commits adultery, another incest, & another incest, another *this* hideous unthinkable sin, another *that* ..."
5. On & one it goes in an unending litany of moral depravity that instead of making people ill at the reporting of it, they yawn in boredom.
6. It's an Old McDonald's Farm of Perversion. Sin-sin here, sin-sin there. Here a sin, there a sin Everywhere a sin EIEIO.

<sup>12</sup> In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase;

1. Usury is *exorbitant interest* by which they get insanely rich on the backs of those who can least afford to get ripped off.

you have made profit from your neighbors by extortion,

1. Not strangers; neighbors! Their greed is so deep, they rip off friends & family with their financial schemes.

## SOUND FAMILIAR?

and have forgotten Me,” says the Lord God.

1. Of course, that’s the root & cause of the entire previous list of wickedness.
2. This is where it starts. Once we turn our backs on God, there’s **no** evil we **won’t** commit.

Judgment Is Coming

In vs. 13-22 God says He’s going to punish them for all their wickedness.

Vs. 25-28

<sup>25</sup> The conspiracy of her [Jeruz’s] 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. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> Her princes in her midst *are* like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain. <sup>28</sup> 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.

1. The priests & prophets were **supposed to be** God’s agents, reminding people of God & warning them about what forsaking Him would lead to.
2. But they’d traded in their holy calling for the same greedy, lustful game the world played.
3. Instead of building a wall against the flood of wickedness, they’d just put a fresh coat of paint on a crumbling wall.
4. They **used religion** as a **means to worldly success**; getting a bigger house, nicer clothes; fame, power.

## SOUND FAMILIAR?

5. The princes, the rulers, instead of serving the people, used their position to brutally enrich themselves.
6. And like the leaders – so the people . . .

<sup>29</sup> The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger.

Vs. 30-31

1. It’s only now that we can read v. 30.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

2. WHERE did God seek for a man to make a wall & stand in the gap?
  - a. The context is clear—**among the leaders**. >> Among the religious & civil rulers.
  - b. There wasn’t a single soul faithful to God.
  - c. They’d all forsaken Him to play the world’s game.
3. Hey, we know of at least 1 in Jerusalem who remained faithful to God Jeremiah.
  - a. In the book of Jeremiah, we discover there was a handful of his supporters who remained true to God.
  - b. But the leaders among both the royal court & the temple opposed Jeremiah.
  - c. They beat him and tossed him in prison.
4. None of them, not one; not a single prince nor prophet called the people back to God.
  - a. The National Prayer Breakfasts were cancelled.
  - b. There was no National Day of Prayer & Fasting.
  - c. No sackcloth nor ashes. Only rebellion & corruption. // So, v. 31

<sup>31</sup> 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.

For Us

1. What is here for us? Obviously – **much**.
2. As it was in the last days of Jerusalem, so it is in America.
3. This list of wickedness sounds like a week’s review of Fox News or CNN Headlines.
  - a. It’s the plotline for primetime TV
  - b. The lyrics to Top 20 radio.
4. Nothing makes people blush anymore – **except** to be called a Christian in public.

5. But even with the litany of evil we find here, what ***dammned them*** was the failure of their leaders, both civil and religious, to speak up & declare what was obvious – that they had turned their backs on God & ***deserved*** what was coming.

a. Listen! God said it was that vacancy in the leaders that was the last straw.

6. Friends, v. 30 isn't really about prayer. It's about the failure of leadership in a society to do what's right & needed.

7. What do we NEED today? I'll tell you: We need men & women of God in government & in the Church who will boldly call our nation to God.

a. Leaders who'll repent of playing for power, repent of courting public favor for political gain & Dare to speak the truth – that we've turned out backs on God and committed horrible sin.

b. And here's what we can do to that end – Pray that God, IN HIS MERCY, would send us just such principled & godly leaders.

8. Paul says this specifically in 1 Tim. 2:2 when we says that we ought to pray for -

kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.