

EZEKIEL: BLOSSOMING DURING LIFE'S MOST SEVERE CRISES

Part XI: God's Certain Judgment of Apostate Leaders

(Ezekiel 22:1-31)

I. Introduction

A. When there is error taught **or permitted to exist** by leaders of God's people, does God hold these leaders responsible for the resulting apostasy of the whole group?

B. This question is answered with a dramatic challenge to every leader in the Lord's Work, Ez. 22!

II. God's Work To Judge Apostate Leaders and Followers Alike, Ezekiel 22:1-31.

A. God was upset at the extensive, evil catalog of sins in the nation of Israel, Ez. 22:1-12:

1. God urged Ezekiel to pronounce judgment on the nation, 22:1-2.

2. This urging arose out of a list of great evils in the nation: (a) extreme, unjust violence (3a,6,9), (b) idolatry (3b), (c) immorality (10-11), social indecencies of disrespect for parents, foreigners, the orphaned and widowed (7), and extortion (v. 12).

B. Because of these great evils, God promised certain judgment as though the nation were cast into a fire as metal to be refined, v. 13-22.

C. Following this pronouncement of judgment, the Lord detailed problems in the leaders of the land that contributed to this apostasy, Ez. 22:23-29:

1. There were sinful problems with the political leaders, the princes, Ez. 22:25,27:

a. The word translated "prophets" in the KJV better reads "princes" in the Hebrew text, cf. NIV, v. 25. (See also Old Testament Translation Problems, A.R. Hulst, United Bible Societies: E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1960, p. 203) These men were guilty of abusing the people who were under them by using their powers for unjust, harmful material gain from their subordinates. People were murdered and many widows came to exist as a result. Instead of becoming examples of godliness and order, they in turn flayed the sheep of God.

b. The priests were evil as well, Ez. 22:26-27: (a) They failed to instruct the people in **all** the Laws of God and (b) profaned God's holy things including the Sabbaths.

c. The prophets were evil, Ez. 22:28-29: Though their job was to **critique** wickedness in the leaders, the prophets **white-washed** the evil deeds of the leaders, stating that such actions were the will of God when it simply not the case!

2. The error of the leaders had led to the apostasy of their subordinates in Israel, Ez. 22:29-30! The common man in Israel was personally guilty of similar sins before the Lord: he had oppressed the weak in the communities, robbed and extorted **just as he had been treated by his overseers**, 22:29!

3. Accordingly, God had looked for a single leader out of the nation who had the authority and moral fiber to turn the tide of apostasy amongst the people, but none was to be found, Ez. 22:30.

4. Because of this extensive decay caused by the deterioration of the leaders in the nation, God determined that there remained no alternative but to deal out justice in **national** judgment, Ez. 22:31.

Lesson: *Those who oversee a class, a ministry, a church or some other area of influence on God's people have a great accountability to God for setting the spiritual tone for the group. (Jas. 3:1)*

Application: *(1) Opposite the bad example of the princes, those who lead in God's work must not financially "fleece" the flock of God under their care. (2) Leaders must not be abusive toward the flock, but let God lead to whatever discipline needs to occur upon subordinates. (3) Leaders who teach must clarify the truth even if it is unpopular. Don't whitewash anything--expose both righteousness and sin! (4) Leaders who teach must educate God's people in ALL the Word--not in just favorite, isolated, well-known texts! (5) Leaders must example righteous living--not profaning God's issues of right and wrong! If they don't, they will hurt many and be judged by God!!*

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