

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious
Part XXIX: God's Great Wrath Against Materialism
(Ezekiel 22:13-22)

I. Introduction

- A. Colossians 3:5c calls "covetousness" (KJV) or "greed" (NIV) **idolatry**, so in light of God's strong opposition to idolatry in the Ten Commandments at Exodus 20:1-6, covetousness, greed or **materialism** is a terrible sin.
- B. Materialism plagues our world today, and the Lord's wrath against this sin is emphasized in Ezekiel 33:13-22, so we view this passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Great Wrath Against Materialism, Ezekiel 22:13-22.

- A. After describing how men in Jerusalem had taken bribes to commit murder and practiced acts of extortion, forgetting God in their idolatry of materialism (Ezekiel 22:12 with Colossians 3:5c), God reacted by claiming He would clap His hands, and act of scorn over these sins, Ezekiel 22:13; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1269.
- B. God's fury against such evil would be so great that He rhetorically asked if Jerusalem's sinners could endure, if their hands could be strong in the day He dealt out punishment against them for this sin, Ezekiel 22:14.
- C. The Lord would scatter these greedy folk among the Gentile nations in judgment, dispersing them among the countries with the fall of Jerusalem, and He would consume their wickedness out of them, Ezekiel 22:15.
- D. The people of Jerusalem guilty of such sins would be profaned by their own actions even in the sight of the pagan Gentiles, and in such judgment, they would finally realize that the Lord was God, Ezekiel 22:16.
- E. In light of this theme of God's wrath against materialism, the Lord then gave a mocking illustration of the evil of these people and of the future outpouring of His wrath against them in Ezekiel 22:17-22 (as follows):
 - 1. God informed Ezekiel that the people of Israel were as metallic dross to Him, all of them were as copper, tin, iron and lead in the furnace that is leftover dross from refining the prized silver, Ezekiel 22:17 ESV. When the silver had been melted down in the furnace so that the dross had floated to the top to be skimmed off and discarded, Israel's people in their materialism were **not** like the valuable silver in God's eyes, but like the worthless, metallic dross to be removed from smelting pot! The materialism that had led them to murder left them as worthless chunks of metal, the opposite of what they lusted in their sin!
 - 2. Accordingly, since Jerusalem's men in their materialism had become as mere dross to God, He promised to gather them into the midst of Jerusalem like one gathers silver, bronze, iron, lead and tin into a smelting furnace, and He would figuratively blow fire on them in judgment to melt all the metals, gathering these people in His anger and wrath figuratively to melt them in dreadfully painful judgment, Ezekiel 22:18-21.
 - 3. As silver is smelted in a furnace that its dross might be removed, these men would be melted in judgment, learning that God was the Lord when He poured out His wrath on them for their materialism, Ezek. 22:22.

Lesson: *God explained that He was furious at the way men in Jerusalem had greedily, unjustly acquired money and material goods from others even at the cost of murdering innocent people. Accordingly, the Lord viewed such sinners as worthless chunks of metal dross left over from refining silver in the smelting pot, and that He would gather them together in the figurative smelting pot of Jerusalem to melt them with the heat of His great wrath. They would learn that He was God, that they had greatly sinned in forsaking Him for the false god of materialism.*

Application: *(1) May we realize that the love of things or money that can buy things is the heinous sin of idolatry that God despises, for it causes people to forget Him and instead to rely on material things as their god. (2) If we evaluate ourselves and discover that we are materialistic, may we repent of that sin and instead rely on the Lord. (3) We need to clarify that owning money or material goods is not itself sin, that even 1 Timothy 6:8 indicates we need "the means of subsistence" or "sustenance" (diatrophas, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 728; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 189; Moulton & Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Grk. N. T., 1972, p. 156) and "what is needed for protective covering," be it housing or clothing (skepasmata, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 761). However, aiming to go beyond acquiring these things to become rich as an end in itself is idolatrous materialism, 1 Timothy 6:9. (4) If God arranges life's circumstances that we become wealthy as a result, 1 Timothy 6:17-19 directs that instead of being conceited and putting our trust in wealth, we should humbly hope in God Who gives us all material things and be rich in good deeds of sharing of that wealth with others in need, particularly needy fellow Christians, Galatians 6:6-10. (5) If we are NOT wealthy, we must avoid covetousness, be content with what we currently have and trust God to meet our livelihood needs, Hebrews 13:5-6.*