

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious Part XXX: God's Complaint At All The Oppressive Overseers (Ezekiel 22:23-31)

I. Introduction

- A. Throughout Scripture, God teaches that those who oversee other people should do so for the welfare of their subordinates, not to their harm. Ezekiel 34:2 is just one passage that illustrates this truth.
- B. Israel's governing officials, priests, prophets and even dominant figures among the people were all guilty of sin in this realm, and Ezekiel 22:23-31 provides God's complaint about it and His decision to punish the wrongdoers. We view this passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Complaint At All The Oppressive Overseers, Ezekiel 22:23-31.

- A. The Lord told Ezekiel to proclaim to the land of Israel that she had not been cleansed so that she had not enjoyed God's blessing of rain, but rather His wrath, Ezekiel 22:23-24.
- B. To explain, Israel's overseers had abusively mishandled their subordinates, polluting the land with the blood of murdered people (cf. Genesis 4:9-10) in the many acts of abuse toward the vulnerable, Ezekiel 22:25-30:
 - 1. The word "prophets" in Ezekiel 22:25a KJV might actually be "princes," the difference between these nouns being a single letter (A. R. Hurst, O. T. Trans. Problems, 1960, p. 203). The context implies that "the prophets are first mentioned in v. 28," so we follow the NIV reading of "princes" in verse 25a.
 - 2. As such, Israel's "princes" or governing officials, had used their power for material gain like ravaging lions, killing people to take spoil and leaving many widows in their midst, Ezekiel 22:25.
 - 3. Israel's priests who were supposed to teach the law had instead used the law to profane God's holy things, to obscure the distinction between holy and profane, between clean and unclean, disregarding God's Sabbaths, a capital offense, so that God was profaned among the people, Ezekiel 22:26.
 - 4. Returning to discuss governing officials again, Ezekiel likened them to wolves who tore their prey, shedding innocent human blood for dishonest gain, Ezekiel 22:27.
 - 5. Even the prophets who were supposed to be messengers of the Lord to the people had smeared whitewash for the people, seeing false visions and divining lies, claiming, "Thus says the Lord God" when the Lord had not said such things, Ezekiel 22:28 ESV.
 - 6. Even the dominant people of the land who were under the civil officials, the priests and the prophets were oppressive to the vulnerable in their midst: they had practiced extortion and committed robbery, oppressing the poor and needy and unjustly extorting valuables from foreigners, Ezekiel 22:29 ESV.
- C. This terrible state of affairs left God searching for even one man among them who would "build up the wall and stand in the breach," just one man who would administer justice to protect Israel's vulnerable subordinates without abusing them, that God might not destroy the land in judgment, Ezekiel 22:30a,b ESV.
- D. However, God could not find even one such man, a hopeless situation for the nation, Ezekiel 22:30c.
- E. Accordingly, God would pour out His wrath on these overseers, recompensing them as their Supreme Overseer for the abuses they had administered against their subordinates, Ezekiel 22:31.

Lesson: *In every realm of Israel's society, be it civil government, religious priesthood, spiritual prophets or even dominant leaders among the people themselves, overseers and the dominant only oppressed vulnerable subjects under them. God graciously sought for even one man to stand in the gap and administer justice in protecting the oppressed, but when He found none, He chose to pour forth His wrath upon them as the Supreme Overseer for all the abuses they had administered upon their subordinates.*

Application: *(1) If God has given us an oversight position in any realm, may we use that position to help, nurture and protect the weak and vulnerable instead of taking advantage of them for our own selfish interests. (2) If we are in an institution where there is a vacuum of protective overseers, but we are among the subordinates who are facing abuse, may we do what is in our power to use what influence we have among our fellow subordinates to protect and nurture them, offering our services before the Lord to be a man who stands in the gap for their good. (3) May we who oversee others realize that we are accountable to the Supreme Overseer, God, and in a deep sense of accountability to Him, take care how we treat our subordinates, protecting and nurturing them to the best of our ability. (4) In times of crisis, God may call us to be one who stands in the breach to build up the wall for afflicted people, so if such a situation arises, may we be ready and willing to heed God's call and stand in the gap for others.*