

Ezekiel – The Death Sentence

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Chapter 22, 23, and 24 contain God's final words to the exiles prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Chapter 22 reads like **a sentencing report after a guilty verdict over a capital crime**. Chapter 23 contains Ezekiel's second extended allegory articulating the sin of Israel. Chapter 24, it is on, **the siege of Jerusalem has started**. (Ez22:14b-16, 24:1-2,21). At chapter 24 we are at the midpoint of the Book of Ezekiel.

The Nature of the Crime: **Idolatry and violent crime** have made the nation incorrigible (Ez22:1-5). Compare the litany of crimes with chapter 18 (Ez22:6-12). The punishment is required: the **application of the curses** specified for the Sinai Covenant (Ez22:13-16, Lv26:25,31-33). God uses **another metaphor** to emphasize his wrath – **"the refining pot"** (Ez22:17-22). **The purpose of smelting metal is to refine it:** this metaphor implies that God has a purpose for the "refined product", i.e., **the remnant who repent and return to the Land of Israel to prepare for the First Advent**.

Identification of the Guilty: **The "leaders" of the nation are primarily responsible:** prophets, priests, and princes (Ez22:23-28). Today the list includes educators, entertainers, influencers, and politicians. But "the people" of the land, **the general population have readily followed the "leaders"** – no one has stood up for the "right" (Ez22:29-31). The "death sentence" is pronounced on everyone from top to bottom in the social structure.

Oholah and Oholibah: Chapter 23 is an allegory of **two whoring sisters: Oholah, Samaria, and Oholibah, Jerusalem**, who stand condemned by God for spiritual adultery and will be punished (Ez23:36-39, 46-47). Idolatry leads to all the moral and ethical sins which are rampant today. The details of the allegory are very transparent – no need to comment on them. Do read the whole chapter.

The Siege of Jerusalem: January 15, 588 BC Nebuchadnezzar invests Jerusalem – the death sentence is immutable (Ez24:1-2, 14). Ezekiel has been preaching for about five years. God uses one last figure of speech to express his disgust with Israel and his future purpose – **"the Parable of the Corroded Pot"** (Ez24:3-5). Jerusalem is the "pot". The "fire" is the siege by the Chaldeans. The "meat" and the "bones" are the people. God carefully explains the meaning of the parable (Ez24:6-13). God will **"take vengeance"** on **"the bloody city"** so that **"its uncleanness may be melted"** away. God declares that **"you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you"**. After the destruction of the nation, and the scattering of the people, **the "cleansing" will be accomplished in the New Israel in the World Tomorrow**.

A Tragic Symbolic Action: The death of his wife must have been horrible for Ezekiel (Ez24:15-18). Death reminds us that God's focus is much larger than our physical lives: there is no way to compare what we have now with eternity. God explains that the sign of Ezekiel's wife's death is to warn the exiles of the impending death of loved ones remaining in Jerusalem – **the destruction of the Temple and the city will shatter all their cherished perceptions** (Ez24:19-24).

Know That I Am YHWH: God is resolute in his purpose – the exiles will come to understand (Ez24:25-27). The people will NOT give up their perception of **"inviolability"** until the destruction occurs; then **"you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD"**. After that, some do respond to the work of Ezekiel and repent forming the remnant community preparing for the First Advent.

The Book of Ezekiel is very carefully constructed:

- All the material in the first 24 chapters occurs prior to the destruction of Jerusalem
- The purpose of the first 24 chapters is to demonstrate that God is in control, the destruction of Jerusalem is his doing, and God is calling some among the exiles to repentance
- **Chapters 25 through 32 are a collection of prophecies about other nations**
- Chapters 33 through 36 are the last words specifically for the exiles
- Chapters 37 through 48 are eschatology

Both **Isaiah** and **Jeremiah** contain large sections of **prophecies about other nations** and several minor prophets also address other nations. The purpose of all the prophecies about other nations is to demonstrate that God's Dominion includes the whole world – he is in control of all history.

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