

Handout Lesson 8

The keywords in this lesson are “judge,” “bloodshed,” and “fire.” The word “judge” is repeated five times. Yahweh tells Ezekiel that “now” is the time to judge the sins of Jerusalem (Ez 22:2; 23:36, 45 twice; 24:14) because it is a city that is full of bloodshed, a word repeated fifteen times (Ez 22:2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 27; 23:37, 45; 24:6, 7 twice, 8, 9). “Fire” is another keyword in Chapters 22-24, repeated seven times in 22:20, 21, 31; 23:47; 24:3, 9, 12.

In the Old Testament, fire is a symbol of:

1. Purification (Lev 13:52; Num 31:23; Mal 3:2-3)
2. Discernment (Jer 23:29; Is 33:14)
3. Judgment (Gen 19:24; Ex 9:24; Ps 66:12; Is 43:2; Is 66:15-16)
4. A manifestation of the presence of God (Ex 3:2; 13:21-22)

In the New Testament, fire is a symbol of God in the manifestation of the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity, God the Holy Spirit (Lk 3:16; Acts 2:2-3) and Divine Judgment (Mt 13:49-50; Lk 3:9; 9:54).

Chapter 22 contains a series of three oracles that concern the present generation. Each oracle begins with the formula statement: “The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows”: Oracle #1 (verses 1-16); oracle #2 (verses 17-22); oracle #3 (verses 23-31).

The theological implications of this oracle are as relevant to ancient Israel as for us today:

1. A society that practices violence will not only self-destruct but will also have to face God’s judgment.
2. A society’s leaders bear a special responsibility for the welfare of its citizens and the lack of justice that damages the community.
3. Knowledge of the will of God is not enough, nor is the claim that one was not fully aware of what it means to live in righteousness. Neither knowledge willfully ignored nor the claim of lack of knowledge is a substitute for the obedience of faith in living according to God’s will.
4. Even when humans disregard their covenant commitments and reject their obedience to the covenant, God will not.
5. Yahweh’s judgment does not signify a rejection of His covenant but the fulfillment of His sworn oath.

The first oracle (22:1-16) is in five parts and announces the general indictment and announces the city’s doom and public disgrace:

1. The call for Jerusalem’s arraignment in a covenant lawsuit (verses 1-2).
2. The summons to Jerusalem to face her indictment (verse 3).
3. The announcement of the charges (verses 4-5).
4. The presentation of the evidence (verses 6-12).
5. The pronouncement of the sentence (verses 13-16).

In 22:6-12, Ezekiel is told to give a detailed indictment, listing the charges into groups of three clusters of social and cultic sins, each beginning with an offense calculated to “shed blood” in verses 6-8, 9-11, and concluding in verse 12:

1. Verses 7-8: *furthered their own interests at the cost of bloodshed* by despising the law to honor one’s parents, ill-treated aliens, oppressed widows and orphans, treated the Sanctuary with contempt, and profaned the Sabbaths.

2. Verses 9-11: *In you informers incite to bloodshed* by eating sacred meals and practice ogres dedicated to false gods, committing sexual sins including incest, forced sex with menstruating women, practicing adultery.
3. Verse 12: *In you people take bribes for shedding blood* by ill-gotten profit like usury and extortion, and forgetting covenant obligations to Yahweh.

The list of charges includes:

- Three charges of cultic offenses: holy things (verse 8), Sabbaths (verse 8), eating sacred meals on mountains (verse 9).
- Five charges of sexual immorality: father's wives (verse 10), menstruating women (verse 10), adultery (verse 11), daughter-in-law (verse 11), paternal sister (verse 11).
- Eight charges of social injustice: bloodshed (verse 6), parents (verse 7), foreigner (7), orphans and widows (verse 7), slanderers (verse 9), bribes (verse 12), interest (12), extortion/ill-gotten profit (verse 12).

The third oracle (22:25-29) judges the sins of the current generation. Yahweh directs this part of the indictment toward the sins of five groups of people: the Davidic princes, civil leaders, religious leaders, prophets, and ordinary people:

1. The Davidic princes, whose duty is to protect the people like a lion defending its pride, are instead devouring their people, especially the disadvantaged, causing them misery (verse 25).
2. The priests are guilty of six sins (verse 26):
 - Violated God's laws
 - Desecrated God's Sanctuary
 - Failed to make the distinction between what is sacred and what is profane
 - Failed to catechize the people concerning ritual purity
 - Neglected the Sabbath laws
 - Dishonored Yahweh
3. The civil leaders/elders take advantage of the people, taking possession of their material wealth and shed the blood of the innocent in unjust verdicts (verse 27).
4. The prophets are accused of conspiracy in using their empty visions and false prophecies to excuse the bad behavior of the leaders and the people (verse 28).
5. The ordinary people practice extortion and theft, oppress the poor and needy, and unjustly treat the resident aliens (verse 29).

The oracle in Chapter 23 that is the judicial indictment for Yahweh's Covenant Lawsuit against Samaria and Jerusalem:

- I. The opening formula (verse 1):
- II. The introduction of those accused (verses 2-4).
- III. The historical background of the crimes (verses 5-35).
 - A. The indictment of Oholah/Samaria (verses 5-10)
 1. The charges (verses 5-8)
 2. The punishment (verses 9-10)
 - B. The indictment of Oholibah/Jerusalem (verses 11-35).
 1. The charges (verses 11-21)
 2. The punishment (verses 22-35)
- IV. Summary of the case against Samaria and Jerusalem (verses 36-49a)

- A. The charges (verses 36-45)
- B. The punishment (verses 46-49a)
- V. The concluding formula (verse 49b)

Chapter 24: Ezekiel receives an oracle concerning the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem on December 589/January 588 BC. According to the dates in 2 Kings 25:1 and Jeremiah 52:4, it was the beginning of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Ezekiel's wife dies the same day (Ez 24:1, 15-18). Her death is the sign that death is coming to Jerusalem. The outline of the oracle in 24:1-14:

1. Preamble (verses 1-3a).
2. Parable of the Boiling Pot (verses 3b-5).
3. The dispute (verses 6-8).
4. Yahweh's wrath vented (verses 9-12).
5. The justification of God's vengeance and conclusion (verses 13-14).

Chapter 24:1-14 ~ the symbolic elements of the Parable of the Boiling Pot

1. The pot is Jerusalem.
2. The pieces of meat in the pot are the citizens.
3. The cook is God.
4. The fire that engulfs the pot is God's divine judgment.
5. The rust inside the pot represents the blood shed inside the city.

The oracle in 24:15-27 divides four parts:

1. The command to perform a sign-act (verses 16-17)
2. The report of the performance of the sign-act (verse 18)
3. The people's request for an explanation (verse 19)
4. The interpretation of the sign-act (verses 20-24)

The justification of God's vengeance in 24:13-14 and the interpretation of Ezekiel's sign-act in verses 20-24 have sobering theological implications for those of us on this side of salvation history. There is no security for those of us in the Kingdom of the Church if the claims of privilege are not matched by obedience in fulfilling the two greatest commandments in love of God and neighbor. Jesus gave us this same message in His discourse on the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46.

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THE SYMBOLIC IMAGES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Image Groups	Part I Covenant relationship	Part II Rebellion	Part III Redemptive Judgment	Part IV Restoration Fulfilled
Covenant Marriage [examples in Scripture]	Israel Bride of Yahweh Isaiah 61:10-11; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:4-14	Unfaithful adulteress/harlot Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 3:6-8; 13:22-23, 26; 23:10; Ezekiel 16:15-34; 23:1-12; Hosea 4:10-14	Humiliated, abused & abandoned by lovers Jeremiah 3:1b-2; 4:30-31; Ezekiel 16:23-61; 23:35-49; Amos 4:7-8; Hosea 2:4-15	The Bride restored to her Bridegroom John 3:28-29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2-9; 22:17
Vineyard or Fig tree [examples in Scripture]	Well-tended vineyard/fruitful fig tree Isaiah 5:1-4; Jeremiah 24:4-7; Ezekiel 19:10-11;	Vines grow wild/failure to produce fruit Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 2:14; Micah 7:1-4; Joel 1:7, 11-12	Weeds overgrow vineyard/ruin and destruction Isaiah 5:3-6; Jeremiah 8:13; 24:1-10; Ezekiel 19:12-14; Nahum 3:12-15	Vines are replanted/fruitfulness restored John 15:1-2, 4-6
Animals Examples in Scripture	Domesticated animals obedient to the yoke of the Master Isaiah 40:10-11; 65:25; Ezekiel 34:15-16; Micah 4:13	Resist the yoke; run away and become wild Exodus 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13; Isaiah 50:6; 53:6; Jeremiah 5:5d-6; 8:6b-7; 23:1-2; Ezekiel 19:1-9	Ravaged by wild beasts/birds of prey Isaiah 50:7; Jeremiah 8:15-17; 50:6-7; Hosea 8:1-14; 13:6-8	Rescued by their Master Matthew 11:28-30; John 1:29, 36; 10:1-18; Revelation 5:6, 13; 7:9-17; 14:1-10; 19:2-9; 21:9-23; 22:1-3
Drinking Wine Examples in Scripture	Joy of drinking good wine Isaiah 25:6-8; 62:8-9; 65:13; Jeremiah 31:12; 40:12	Becoming drunk Isaiah 5:11-12; 28:1; Jeremiah 8:13; 48:26; 51:7; Joel 1:5	Loss of wine; drinking the “cup of God’s wrath” Psalm 75:9; Isaiah 51:17-23; 63:2-3; Jeremiah 13:12-14; 25:15-31; 49:12; 51:6-7; 48:26; Ezekiel 23:31-34; Joel 4:13; Habakkuk 2:16	Rejoicing in the best “new wine” at the Master’s table Promise: Zechariah 9:15-16; Joel 4:18; Amos 9:13 Fulfilled: Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32; Revelation 19:7-9

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- ◆ Part I: Yahweh and his people enter into a Covenant relationship. Yahweh will bind this people to Himself in the blessings of security and prosperity in return for obedience to the Covenant of the Torah [first 5 books of Moses].
- ◆ Part II: Israel, the Covenant people ignore the Laws of the Covenant; they rebel by going their own way.
- ◆ Part III: God sends His holy prophet to call His people back to Him. Failing in this mission the prophet calls down a Covenant Lawsuit which results in Covenant curses—punishment meant to bring about repentance and restoration.
- ◆ Part IV: In response to repentance, Yahweh reaches out to restore and to take His people back into the Covenant relationship they had first enjoyed.