



Ezekiel 21-22

Tape #7323
Ezekiel 21-22
By Chuck Smith

I'm convinced that these prophets of God must have seemed to be rather eccentric characters. God had them doing different things, and often times strange things that might even appear to be rather bizarre, as they would seek to draw attention to the message that they had to give. The important thing is always the message. Not always are people ready to listen to the message. So God had them do things to illustrate the message, to attract attention, so that He could get the message across to the people.

So in chapter twenty one, we have Ezekiel doing things that would draw attention to the message that he was bringing to them.

The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set your face towards Jerusalem, [So he's to stand, he's in Babylon, but he's to stand facing Jerusalem.] and drop thy word towards the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel. [So standing there in Babylon, facing Jerusalem, he's to prophesy against the land.] And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. [God is going to bring an end to the nation, an end to the kingdom.] Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: That all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: and it shall not return any more. [God is going to bring His judgment, it is settled, it'll come upon the whole land, and so he was to then begin to, sigh, just this heavy, loud sighing.] Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. [“Hold yourself in the stomach, and just start moaning, and sighing and all, and just making sort of a spectacle of yourself as you hold your stomach, and just really sigh aloud for them all to hear.”] And it shall be, when they say unto you, Why are you sighing? [“You know, just draw attention to it, so they'll ask questions, and they'll say, ‘Why are you sighing?’”] you are to answer them, For the tidings; because it's coming: every heart shall melt, and all of the hands shall be feeble, every spirit shall faint, and all of the knees shall be weak as water: behold, it's coming, and it shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord God (21:1-7).

Now this is in contrast to the false prophets that were in Babylon, that were saying to the people, “Don't build houses, don't plant vineyards, don't settle down, hang loose! It's only a matter of days, and we're gonna hear that Babylon was defeated at Jerusalem, and God is gonna take us back into the land! So don't, don't get settled here at all, because we're not gonna be here long!” Jeremiah was prophesying and declaring that they should surrender to Babylon, rather than to seek to defend themselves, because if they tried to defend themselves, it's only gonna mean a greater slaughter.

Ezekiel is here now sighing, and here are the people in hopes. “Good tidings gonna come! Any day the messengers are gonna come and say, ‘Come on home! Let's go back’”. Ezekiel is sighing, and they say, “Why are you sighing?” He says, “Because the tidings are coming, but they are evil tidings, the tidings are gonna come that the city has been destroyed, that the people are scattered, that the nation does not exist any more.”

So again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also [made ready] furbished: It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: [Polished it, and sharpened it.] should we then make mirth? [Or, “Should we then have parties?”] it condemneth the rod of my son, as every tree (21:8-10).

“Now is not the time for parties, now is not the time for celebration, we're on the brink of destruction. The judgment of God is about to fall! It's not really party time at all!”

And he hath given it to be [polished, or] furbished, that it may be handled: the sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. [So he was to] Cry and to howl, [So here's ole' Ezekiel,

“What’s he doin howling like that?”, after sighing, holding himself, bending over and sighing, now the guy is howling.] *and it shall be [he said] upon my people, it shall be upon the princes of Israel: terrors will come by reason of the sword that are upon the people: smite therefore upon thy thigh.* [So he was to start smiting himself on the thigh.] *Because it is a trial, and what if the sword condemn even the rod? it shall be nor more, saith the Lord God.* [The nation is not going to survive this onslaught.] *Now therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thy hands together,* [Now to draw attention, you remember in school when the teacher wanted to get the attention of the class, “boys and girls”, so he was to smite his hands together now, clapping his hands to draw the attention of the people to his message.] *let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of great men that are slain, which entered into their private chambers. I have set the point of the sword against all of their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied: ah! it is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter. Go thee one way or the other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set. And I will smite my hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the Lord have said it (21:11-17).*

So God’s pronounced judgment. The sword is going to fall upon the land. They are going to be destroyed. The nation is going to be brought to an end.

So the word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both two shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbah to the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with the images, and he looked in the liver (21:18-21).

So what he is declaring is that as Nebuchadnezzar is moving with his forces, against, moving south, he comes to this fork in the road. The one road to the left would lead down to Ammon, Rabbah of the Ammonites, the capital. The other road to the right would lead to Jerusalem. He is there going to determine, “Should I go to the left, and move against Ammon, or shall I go to the right, and move against Jerusalem?”

Now they had various ways of divination, seeking guidance from supernatural powers. One of these was by taking the arrows, putting them in the quiver, and marking one of the arrows that would signify to the right, and the other arrow that would signify, sort of a heads or tails kind of thing. “Heads, we go this way. Tails, we go that way.” You know. So they would put the two arrows in the quiver, and they would mark them. Then they would shake the quiver, until one of the arrows would fall out. If the left arrow would fall out, then they would go to the left. If the right arrow would fall out, they’d go to the right.

They had their little images, their little idols, and they would consult the idols, they would pray to the idols. Then they would offer a sacrifice to the idol, and when they would offer the sacrifice, they would cut the sacrifice open and examine the liver. If the liver was healthy and all, then they would go to the right. If the liver was bad, then they would go to the left. So it was just ways of divination, ways of trying to seek a kind of a supernatural guidance. It was practiced, you find in history it mentioning these kinds of practices where they would seek divine guidance in which way to go.

So he is to depict Nebuchadnezzar coming to the party, to the left, he would move against Ammon. To the right, he would move against Jerusalem. At the forks of the junction there, he used this divination to find out which way to go, and it came out...

To the right hand, was the divination for Jerusalem, [So the Babylonian troops moved towards Jerusalem.] *to appoint the captains to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to a battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort.* [So it was determined that Jerusalem would be the victim.] *And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance their iniquity, that they may be taken. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because you have made your iniquities* [We’re talking now to Israel, “you’ve made your iniquity”.] *to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all of your doings your sins do appear; because I say, that you are come to remembrance, and ye shall be taken with the hand (21:22-24).*

So God here is again prophesying that because of the iniquity of the people, because of their transgressions, the city is going to fall to Babylon. In spite of all of the false prophets who were declaring

otherwise, God is declaring, “They are surely going to fall”.

This was hard for some of them to accept. Because Babylon was noted for its wickedness. When the prophet Habakkuk started to complain to the Lord because of all of the corruption in the land of Israel, Habakkuk had insights into government policies, and things were just totally corrupt. Until, Habakkuk finally prayed, and said, “Lord I would rather not know anything more. I would just as soon you not show me anything else. Because the whole system is just so messed up, and so corrupt, and you’re not doing anything about it. That just tears me up! I can’t stand it Lord that things are going so bad, and you’re, you’re not doing anything!” So the Lord spoke to Habakkuk, and said, “I am doing something, and if I told you what I was doing, your ears would tingle!” So, the Lord said, “I am preparing the Babylonians, and I am going to bring them against this city, and they will be my instruments to judge the people for their wickedness”.

Habakkuk complained, and he said, “Wait a minute Lord! The Babylonians? Now look, we are bad, that’s true, but they’re worse than we are! Why would you use a nation that is even more wicked, worse than we are, to judge us?” That, that was a problem that, the people thought, “Well surely you know, we are wicked, true. We have turned from God, true. We are following idols, true. But yet, we’re still not as bad as the Babylonians! So God surely wouldn’t use the Babylonians as an instrument of judgment against us!” But that’s exactly what God had declared He was going to do, and that’s of course, exactly what God did do.

So Zedekiah was the last of the kings. He was a wicked king. The nation was in great peril. It was on the verge of destruction. The only hope for the nation at this point, would be a total repentance and turning to God. If the king would lead them in repentance, and calling upon God, God is merciful, and they could’ve been spared.

But instead Zedekiah continued in the ways of wickedness, imprisoning the prophet Jeremiah, and just not really leading the people back to God, or back to repentance, but going on with politics, with an endeavor to create an alliance with Egypt, whereby they might have a mutual defense pact, and with Egypt’s help, hopefully defeat the Babylonians. Looking to the arm of man, rather than the hand of God for help. So God speaks of Zedekiah, this wicked king, and He says...

And you, profane wicked prince of Israel, [Zedekiah] whose day is come, [Or, more or less, “your days has come”!] when iniquity shall have an end, [“I’m going to bring an end to your iniquity, your day has come, you wicked, profane prince!”] Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, [The miter] and take off the crown: [The miter was worn by the high priest, the diadem, “take off the crown”, worn by the king.] this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. [So Zedekiah is going to be abased, God then said,] I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: [That is, the kingdom of Israel.] and it shall be no more, [Zedekiah was the last king of Israel, and end to the Davidic dynasty, as God has announced now, the judgment, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more”,] until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him (21:25-27).

Now God promised unto David that there would always be from him, a man upon the throne. God promised that the Messiah would come of David’s seed. All through the Old Testament in the prophecies of the Messiah, it referred to Him as, “Sitting upon the throne of David, establishing the throne of David”. Thus, when the Lord promised to David that there should not cease to be one of his seed upon the throne, David understood that to refer to the Messiah.

David said, “Lord what can I say! I was nothing! I was only a shepherd, I was out there following after the sheep, but yet you took me, and you made me the king over your people. And, and not only that! Now you’ve spoken of my descendant that will come, the Messiah!” David said, “What can I say!” He was, he was brought to that place of being so overwhelmed with the grace and the goodness of God that he was speechless! He couldn’t find words to express his feelings. Just totally overwhelmed by the grace, and the goodness of God!

Have you ever been in that place? I’ll tell you that’s one of the most blessed places! Where you just sit there overwhelmed by the grace of God! You just, “God you’re so good, what can I say?” You know, the English language just isn’t adequate. You can’t express how you feel about God’s goodness, and God’s grace, and God’s blessing! You’re just overwhelmed by it!

David, of all people, was probably one of the most articulate persons in the history of the world. He wrote over a thousand songs! He was so articulate. Whenever I want to really praise the Lord, I turn to David's songs, and he was so expressive in his praises to the Lord, that they become a model for praise! They become a guide for my worship and my praise. I enjoy the Psalms, because David was so capable in expressing to God, the praises and thanksgivings, and all. Yet, David with all of his great ability of, of being able to express himself, was so overwhelmed by what God had done, he was just speechless!

Savonarola said, "When prayer reaches its ultimate, words are impossible". You know when you just sit there, and God is working in your life, and you're just sort of overwhelmed by what God has done, words just become impossible. Those are just precious moments in life. Wonderful experiences in life! They happen every once in awhile. They, you know it isn't a daily kind of a thing, you couldn't handle it! I mean, ha, ha, it's like uh, you know, that romantic love, that wears off because you couldn't live. You know, you wouldn't eat, you wouldn't do anything you know, you just sit around and look at each other. So that wears off, and you get down to reality you know. So with this kind of an experience. It happens every once in awhile, it's just a joy, and a rejoicing when it does!

Now here God made the promise to David, but now Zedekiah, the last descendant of David is to be removed from the throne. The crown is to be taken. It is not actually to be given again until, "the One comes whose right it is". That is, that descendant of David, the promised Messiah. When He comes, God will give to Him the crown, the throne of David, and He will rule and reign in righteousness. Isn't it interesting that from the death of Zedekiah, there has not been a king over Israel? When they returned from their captivity, they did not establish again a monarchy.

At the time of Christ, they were actually ruled over by the Roman government, and the vassal Herod, the Great, the appointee of Rome, at the birth of Christ. They were ruled over actually, not by a king, but there was a religious body that ruled. The high priest more or less took over the rulership of the nation, from a religious sense. But from a, from a practical sense they were ruled over by Rome. Even now, having returned to the land, they established a parliamentary type of form of government, and are not ruled by a king.

So as God said He was going to remove the crown, and it wasn't to be given out again until He comes, whose right it is. But when Jesus returns, He will establish the kingdom of God upon the earth. He will be crowned, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords", and He will begin His righteous reign over the earth. The descendant of David. Jerusalem will become the capital of the world, and Christ reigning from Jerusalem. So God promised, "I will give it to Him."

The promise of God in Psalm two, to His Son, "Thou art My Beloved Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of Me, and I will give to You the nations for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the world, for Your possession." So it is to come, and we wait for that day!

Really, as I look at the world today, and the conditions of the world, I believe that the only hope for the world's survival is for Jesus to come, and establish God's kingdom. I think that we are on the last down hill spiral. We're going down, we're at an accelerating pace, and there is no hope for the world's survival, apart from a total, radical change, that shall take place according to the word of God. Man is on the road to Armageddon. We are fast moving towards Armageddon. If it doesn't get us, AIDS will. Or, something else! I mean, there are so many things, that we're moving towards the end very rapidly, the end of man's futile attempts to rule over fellow man.

You see what history has proven is that man is incapable of ruling over his fellow man, without greed taking over, and corruption coming in. No matter what form of government you may devise, ultimately it becomes corrupted. You may start off with the highest ideals, but ultimately corruption takes over. But there is a rightful heir to the throne of David, and He shall come and sit upon the throne!

And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites (21:28),

Now because Nebuchadnezzar did not go towards Ammon, remember he was at the parting of the way, chose divinations and the arrow signified he was to go to the right, so he came down to Jerusalem. So the Ammonites were exalting over the destruction of Jerusalem. They were ready to move in and to plunder the city when the Babylonians left. So He said, "Prophecy against the Ammonites"...

concerning their reproach over God's people; [They were reproaching the people of God] and say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn: for the slaughter it is been furbished, to consume because of the glittering. Whiles they see vanity into thee, while they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end (21:28-29).

The Ammonites were gonna move in and plunder. They were going to take what was left of the loot. So He pronounces the judgments that are to come against Ammon.

Shall I cause it to return into the sheath? [That is, the sword] I will judge you in the place where you were created, in the land of your nativity. [In other words, "Once the Babylonians have destroyed Jerusalem, they're going to then turn against you."] And I will pour out my indignation upon you, I will blow against you the fire of my wrath, deliver you into the hand of brutish men, skillful to destroy. And you will be as fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land; and you will be no more remembered: for I the Lord have spoken it (21:30-32).

Have you heard, or met, an Ammonite lately? As God said, "You're gonna get wiped out. You're not gonna be remembered. I mean, it's over for you". So the Ammonite race passed from history. They no longer exist.

Chapter 22

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, will you judge, [And then literally] you will judge the bloody city? [Jerusalem, the city of blood, bloody city, it used to be known as the holy city of God, the city of peace, but it was to be known as the bloody city.] yes you will show her all of her abominations. [So now He is going to list the sins that brought the judgment of God against Jerusalem, and its destruction.] Say, Thus saith the Lord God, The city sheds blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and makes idols against herself to defile herself (22:1-2).

The people were sacrificing their babies! Shedding the innocent blood of their babies in sacrifices to their pagan gods, Molech.

You are guilty in your blood that you have shed; you have defiled yourself with your idols which you have made; and you have caused the days to draw near, and are come even unto your years: therefore I have made you a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries (22:4).

Once great, once powerful. Once known as the people of God, once feared as the people of God. Now they are a reproach. People taunt and make fun of their weaknesses. Because they had turned from God and were worshiping idols.

Those that be near, [That is, nations] and those that are far from you, shall mock you, because you are infamous and much vexed. Behold, the princes of Israel, [The leaders, the rulers] every one were in thee to their power to shed blood (22:5-6).

There was all kinds of intrigue and assassinations. Assassinations of rulers and of those who were a threat to a person in power.

In thee have they set a light by their father [They set light by their fathers, the commandment was to honor your father and mother, but they were not respecting their parents, they thought lightly of them, and so, "they set light by their father"] and their mother: [No respect or honor] In the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: [God told them to be kind to the strangers, but they oppressed them.] in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow (22:7).

They took advantage of, of people, of the underprivileged. Rather than helping them, they took advantage of them.

There is something about human nature that, that we seem rather than to have pity on the misfortune of others, there are always those who are ready to try to profit off of the misfortune of others. There are so many of these trade schools and all, that are targeting the poor people that, that really can't afford it. But they're promising them you know, "Graduate from our school, and guarantee you a job of you know, twenty five dollars, and all", and they target people who can least afford it, and it's tragic! I think of how we, here in America, take advantage really of the Mexican nationals that come over the border. In our past history, they took advantage of the Chinese, the coolie labor. It seems like we're always willing to exploit the

underprivileged, or the people that are, as they were the fatherless, the widows, the strangers, take advantage of them.

I think that God has reserved some of the hottest spots in hell, for some of these TV evangelists, who take advantage of widows. I had one little widow, sweet woman, but she was old and a little senile, but lovely, I love her, I loved her, she's now with the Lord and much better off! But she came to me, and she said, "Look pastor Chuck, this evangelist, he wrote me a, a letter here, look! A personal letter", and all. It was one of those computerized things, and you know it was encouraging her to go out and borrow a hundred dollars, and, and send it to him. Here she was on social security, hardly able to make it, but oh so excited, and, "he had such a tremendous need that she was gonna go to the bank and borrow some money to send to him, and all. I knew that the guy had a fancy home here in Corona Del Mar, I knew that he had a million dollar home in Palm Springs, and I knew that he had paid a hundred thousand dollars for a prized bull. Here she's sending him a hundred bucks, and he's taking advantage of these little widows! I wrote him and told him that I'm glad that I won't be in his shoes when he has to face the Lord. That was what was going on in Israel, God said, "That's why you're getting it man! That's why the judgment is coming!"

You have despised my holy things, you have profaned my sabbaths (22:8).

You know I, I have to just conclude, with a lot of these people, they just don't have the fear of the Lord in their heart. If they really had the fear of the Lord, they couldn't pull off the scams that they pull off. They just couldn't do it if they had the fear of the Lord. Here, the Lord declares that, "You've despised my holy things", there's no fear of God. They, they take that which should be holy, and sacred, and they profane it.

In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: [They're, they would give false testimony that would cause people to be put to death, you can hire people to witness for you, to perjure themselves, and you could get rid of your enemies by bringing charges.] and in thee they eat upon the mountains: [That is, offer the sacrifices to the pagan gods, to the idols.] and in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one has committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; another has lewdly defiled his daughter in law; another in thee has humbled his sister, his father's daughter (22:9-11).

All kinds of incest, immorality was taking place in the land. I look at that, and the charges that God is making, and these are the reasons why God said, "You're gonna get the sword, you're gonna get destroyed, you're gonna get wiped out".

I look at these charges that God is making, and He could very well be making them against the United States. I mean, the very same things that they were guilty of are, are, are happening here! It, there is this whole immoral kind of spirit that has captured our nation! So God could very well be charging us with these very same things.

You have taken gifts to shed blood; [That is, murder for hire, hired killers.] you have taken usury and increase, [Loan sharks] you have greedily gained of your neighbours by extortion, and you have forgotten me, saith the Lord God. ["In all of your corruption and crime and every thing else, you've left God out of your life, you've forgotten God."] Behold, therefore I have smitten my hand at the dishonest gain which you have made, and at the blood which has been in the midst of you. Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I will deal with you? ["You're gonna faint, and you're gonna get wiped out, there's no way you can stand against the judgment of God when that day arrives!"] I will scatter you among the heathen, I will disperse you in the countries, and I will consume the filthiness out of you. And you shall take your inheritance in yourself in the sight of the heathen, and you shall know that I am the Lord. [When God lays His hand upon you, and judges, then you'll know that God does see, and God does require from you, those things.] So the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is become as dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even as the dross of the silver (22:12-18).

God is gonna put them through the fire. They are as dross, which is to be destroyed by the furnace.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because you are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you in the midst of Jerusalem. And as they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in my anger and in my fury, and I

will leave you there, and melt you. Yes, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so will you be melted in the midst of it; and you shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you (22:19-22).

It is passages like this that cause people sometimes to be upset. They say, "Well I don't like the God of the Old Testament". "Because He speaks of judgment, He speaks of anger, fury, wrath!" People would like to think that they can get by with their sin. They don't like the idea of having to be accountable for the things they do. They would rather that God be very weak, and a sort of a wimp, and say, "Oh well, that's alright, do what you want", but not so! God is going to judge. He has demonstrated it in the past, He will demonstrate it in the future! You won't get by with sin! The Bible says, "You can be sure your sin will find you out!" A lot of times people think they're getting by with it, but you're not. Oh you may have escaped the authorities here. But you won't escape the authority of God. You can be sure your sins will find you out!

So God is speaking of His judgment. A fiery judgment, like a furnace, "gonna put you in, and just burn out, melt you in the midst of the furnace".

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, You are the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening on the prey; they have devoured souls; [These were the false prophets, going around devouring people, taking advantage of people.] they have taken the treasure and the precious things; [Sounds familiar!] they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. The priests have violated my law, they have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, [Everything became profane with them.] neither have they showed difference between the unclean, and the clean, they have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. [They joke and make fun of, of the things of God, make light of the things of God.] Then her [priests, I mean, this is a mess, the prophets, the priests, and now the,] princes [the leaders, the rulers] in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, to destroy souls, in order to get dishonest gain (22:23-27).

Corruption all the way through! The prophets were corrupt, the priests were corrupt, and the government was corrupt. Sounds rather familiar doesn't it? *And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar (22:28),*

They've put on a front, "It looks good! You know my! Isn't that great?" Watch out when the rain comes! That's mud they've put on, they haven't put any lime in it, and it'll wash right out. It has a good appearance, but there's no strength to it. So, "the prophets have daubed it with untempered mortar", because...

they see vanity, and they divine lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord has not spoken (22:28).

How that is happening today! Hank Hanegraff is coming out with a book and I keep pressing him to hurry up! We've pre-ordered a thousand of them, and what Hank is saying in the book is long overdue! He's going to say things that need to be, he's, he's like the prophet Ezekiel, Jeremiah, they'll probably want to kill him, and throw him in prison and everything else if they could. But what he is saying in the book needs to be said! Because they're saying, "Thus saith the Lord..., Thus saith the Lord...!" God said, "I haven't spoken." Some of the weird things that these guys are saying, heresies that are coming out of their mouths, supposedly in prophecy. "Thus saith the Lord... You are gods! Exercise your faith!", and all this kind of stuff. "You can create your own realities.", you know. Anyhow...

The people of the land have used oppression, they've exercised robbery, they've taken advantage of the poor, and the needy: and they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully (22:29).

Things were a total mess! Now what's God doing in the midst of this?

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none (22:30).

God said, "I was just looking for some righteous men. Men that would stand up! Men, men that would stand against this stuff. Men who would build up the hedge against the evil." Men who would stand in the gap, through intercessory prayer between God, and these wicked people. For even at this point, God was reluctant to destroy them. Though they had it coming, they deserved it completely, yet God is reluctant in judgment. So patient, so longsuffering! Even at this point, He's still looking for an excuse to forgive! All He

needs are some men who will stand in the gap, who will make up the hedge, that He might forestall His judgment. But God said, "I found none".

I wonder how many times in history the judgment of God could've been averted, if there'd only been men of God who would've stood up to be counted, and would've stood against the iniquity, and the sin that was going on?

Therefore [God said, "because there was no man"], I poured out my indignation upon them; I've consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord (22:31).

All for the lack of a man! A godly man to stand in the gap, and to intercede for the people. In order that God might have an excuse to be merciful! God help us! I wonder today, if God isn't looking for men to make up the hedge, to stand in the gap. May we be those men!

Shall we pray?

Father, we look at the tragedy of the nation that once was known as, "the people of God". A nation that once honored You, a nation that once was so in love with You, that they wrote on the walls, and upon the harnesses of their horses, "Holiness unto the Lord!" The people who forsook You, people who turned away from You, and went greedily after other things. The gods and the idols of the heathen. Lord we see Your righteousness in judgment, as You brought against them the wrath of their enemies, and You released them to be destroyed by their enemies, because they had released You from being their God. Lord help us to learn from their mistakes. May we, as a people, remain steadfast and true unto You. Holy, committed, and O God help us that we might stand in the gap. For, we realize that our nation is ripe for judgment. Lord we pray, that you might soon send Your Son to deliver this world from the grip, and the power of darkness. That You would establish Your kingdom of righteousness. But we ask that You would establish it in our hearts tonight. May we live righteously before You, in honesty, and purity, and holiness. In Jesus' name, Amen.