

The Visions of Ezekiel

Lesson 15

4. Ezekiel's Twenty-fourth Assignment from the LORD

a) The Sword Sharpened and Polished

Eze 21:8 Again **the word of the LORD came to me**, saying, **Eze 21:9** "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the LORD.' Say, 'A sword, a sword sharpened And also polished!' **Eze 21:10** 'Sharpened to make a slaughter, Polished to flash like lightning!' Or shall we rejoice, the rod of My son despising every tree?"

In this poetic song of the LORD we see that He has prepared His sword for battle – sharpened to a razor's edge, polished to “**flash like lightning.**” Who was the sword intended for? It was for all who remained in the Southern Kingdom. Why? Because the people of the Southern Kingdom had despised every “rod” by “**despising every tree.**”

What is the “rod?” For the Bible student today, the word “rod” should best be translated *scepter*. It means *the authority of the king*. In this passage the LORD was speaking about the king of Babylon who held the scepter and was despised by “**every tree.**” In the previous passage, the LORD spoke of the cedar trees that would be ignited in the forests around Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city. Therefore, in this third vision, the LORD had already spoken to the *elders of Israel* and placed in their thoughts the destruction of the trees. But before arriving in the Southern Kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the trees in the land of Lebanon to the north of the kingdom. For the most part, the trees of Lebanon would all be laid on the ground.

b) The Sword Given to the Slayer

Eze 21:11 "It is given to be polished, that it may be handled; the sword is sharpened and polished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. **Eze 21:12** "Cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against My people, it is against all the officials of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with My people, therefore strike *your thigh*. **Eze 21:13** "For *there is a testing*; and what if even the rod which despises will be no more?" declares the Lord GOD.

In this second stanza, the polished sword was ready to use and the LORD gave it “**into the hand of the slayer.**” We need not speculate about the target of this slayer for the LORD said it would be “**against My people ... the officials of Israel ... They are delivered over to the sword with my people.**” The LORD spoke this stanza as if it had already occurred. It had not for the Southern Kingdom, but it would soon. However, the same sword of Nebuchadnezzar had taken to their deaths the people of many other nations. Egypt, for one, had already come under his control by his deadly invasion. “**... strike your thigh. For there is a testing...**” We might

not know what this meant had the LORD not been speaking through Jeremiah in Jerusalem at the same time He was speaking to Ezekiel. Hear the words of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:¹⁹ 'For after I turned back, I repented; And after I was instructed, I smote on *my* thigh; I was ashamed and also humiliated Because I bore the reproach of my youth.'

Striking or smoting the thigh as Jeremiah did was not strange then and it is not strange today. We all have seen those in great grief make their hands into fists and beat their thighs to expel great emotion from within. That was what the LORD told Ezekiel to do in the sight of the *elders*. Why? It was because the sending of Nebuchadnezzar to Jerusalem would comprise a great “**testing**,” which meant the trial of the onslaught of Nebuchadnezzar was going to be horrendous. And then the LORD finished the stanza with “... **and what if even the rod which despises will be not more?**” In this stanza, the “**rod**” was not the scepter of Nebuchadnezzar. This was the “**rod**” and scepter of Zedekiah. “*What if Zedekiah was no more? What if the Southern Kingdom did not have a king on the throne? What if the Southern Kingdom was desolate?*” Poetic as it is, surely the *elders* sitting in front of Ezekiel knew by that time that Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom were doomed for destruction and the King of Babylon was the one ordained to accomplish the task.

c) The Sword for the Great One Slain

Eze 21:14 **"You therefore, son of man, prophesy and clap *your* hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword for the slain. It is the sword for the great one slain, which surrounds them,** ^{Eze 21:15} **that *their* hearts may melt, and many fall at all their gates. I have given the glittering sword. Ah! It is made *for striking* like lightning, it is wrapped up *in readiness* for slaughter.**

Here in the third stanza Ezekiel was told to “**prophesy and clap your hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time ...**” Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem three times. First against Jehoiakim. Second against Jehoiachin. Third and soon to occur in the story, against Zedekiah. This third time the sword would “**double**” the damage experienced in either of the two previous visits. As seen in this passage, the sight of Nebuchadnezzar outside the city walls would emotionally destroy the souls of those within. The sword of the LORD was ready. Ready to kill! Just a little more time would pass before it would kill.

“**Clap your hands together**” had a specific meaning in that day. The practice was meant to get the attention of the listeners. But it meant more than that. It meant authority. It meant the deed would be done. Surely we all can remember as a child in school when a teacher would give an instruction and then double-clap her hands which meant *get it done now!* So, too, the LORD told Ezekiel to clap his hands as a prophecy that Nebuchadnezzar was about to *get it done now*.

d) The Sword to Appease the Wrath of the LORD

Eze 21:16 **"Show yourself sharp, go to the right; set yourself; go to the left, wherever your edge is appointed.** ^{Eze 21:17} **"I will also clap My hands together, and I will appease My wrath; I, the LORD, have spoken."**

Nebuchadnezzar was appointed to “**go to the right ... go to the left.**” In between he was to “**set**” himself. It meant he had full authority to go to the north or to the south or wherever he needed to go to be the sword of the LORD, to do His work in punishing the *rebellious house of Israel*.

5. Ezekiel's Twenty-fifth Assignment from the LORD

a) Two Paths for the King of Babylon

Eze 21:18 The word of the LORD came to me saying, Eze 21:19 "As for you, son of man, make two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city.

In this twenty-fifth assignment for the prophet, the LORD told Ezekiel to install a sign post at the edge of the city with directions toward two paths for the King of Babylon to choose from when he came through. We have all seen signs like this, if not in real life, surely in old movies or cartoons. The pole is placed in the ground and a board with an arrow at one end points down one road and another board points down another. When the king arrived with his men, he would have to decide which destination point he wanted to follow.

b) A Path to Ammon and Judah

Eze 21:20 "You shall mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem. Eze 21:21 "For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the household idols, he looks at the liver.

One sign would point Nebuchadnezzar toward Rabbah, a town in the tribal area of Ammon. The word "mark" would be better translated *paint*. The LORD said, paint a "way for the sword to come to Rabbah." Leaving the Chabar River and travelling down that trade route would take Nebuchadnezzar on the east side of the Jordan River into the land of Ammon, north of the land of Moab, east of the Dead Sea. Why Ammon? At that time, according to Jeremiah, the tribes of Ammon and Moab were united with Zedekiah in opposition to Nebuchadnezzar. For a reminder, Ammon and Moab, the patriarchs of these tribes, were the two sons of Lot, Abraham's nephew, born to Lot one year after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the formation of the Dead Sea. These same tribes opposed the *nation of Israel* when it attempted to move up the east side of the Dead Sea to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land from the east moving west. But with all the trouble with Babylon, these cousins of Israel had joined the efforts of Zedekiah.

Jeremiah 27:¹ In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying—² thus says the LORD to me—"Make for yourself bonds and yokes and put them on your neck,³ and send word to the king of Edom, to the king of Moab, to the king of the sons of Ammon, to the king of Tyre and to the king of Sidon by the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.⁴ "Command them *to go* to their masters, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, thus you shall say to your masters,⁵ "I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight."⁶ "Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him."⁷ "All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.

This sign, written by Ezekiel, was a warning to Ammon at least. Nebuchadnezzar was going to deal with Ammon when he arrived. “Rabbah” is mentioned here. It was the capital city of the tribe of Ammon. It was the home of the Ammonite king.

The other sign pointed to the tribe of Judah and its capital city of Jerusalem. We have already heard much about what Nebuchadnezzar would do to Jerusalem and more still remains to be said. Therefore, we will leave the description about Nebuchadnezzar’s intent to another section of this lesson.

By giving this instruction to Ezekiel, the LORD was giving Nebuchadnezzar a choice too. What would he do? How would he know which road to choose? Divination was the answer. Shake the arrows in the quiver and pour them on the ground. How many pointed to Ammon; how many pointed to Judah? Then he would pull out his idol that he carried with him and ask the idol. We have no information as to how the idol would respond! Why? Because it could not. In that case, he would look at a liver. Here and only here do we find this concept in the Bible. It was a strange concept to the Israelites and never used in their worship and inquiry of the LORD. But for the Babylonians and many other ancient societies, looking into the liver was extremely important. With these groups, the liver was the source of life. As in Proverbs 7:23 and Lamentations 2:11, there was a great fear of death caused by the liver’s being pierced with an arrow or being poured out on the ground. No doubt, either situation would be fatal to human or animal. The liver is important, but not the center of life; that position is held by the heart. Still, a liver would be cut out of the animal and cast to the ground. The direction closest to where the point of the liver was headed was the answer to the diviner’s question. What was a diviner or divination? Divination was the opposite counterpart to prophecy in the Scripture. It was always evil and a diviner was evil too. The LORD gave Israel specific instructions to be extremely hostile to the diviner and his divination.

Deuteronomy 18:¹⁰ "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,¹¹ or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. ¹² "For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.

c) A Path to Jerusalem

Eze 21:22 "Into his right hand came the divination, 'Jerusalem,' to set battering rams, to open the mouth for slaughter, to lift up the voice with a battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build a siege wall.

The LORD revealed to Ezekiel the choice Nebuchadnezzar would make. It would be toward Jerusalem first. He would arrive there with a full army and all the mighty tools of war.

(1) A Reason to Remember

Eze 21:23 "And it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes; they have *sworn* solemn oaths. But he brings iniquity to remembrance, that they may be seized. **Eze 21:24** "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you will be seized with the hand.'

The Israelites in Jerusalem would not believe their eyes when they saw Nebuchadnezzar outside the walls of the city. The Israelites would think the divination of the sorcerer had all gone wrong. The sins of their past were ever before them and they were unable to forget them.

But the men of Israel had made a “solemn oath” to Nebuchadnezzar and that oath they had avoided. When Nebuchadnezzar arrived, his mere presence would cause them to think about how they had treated him and rebelled against him.

(2) A Prince of Israel

Eze 21:25 'And you, O slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end,' Eze 21:26 thus says the Lord GOD, 'Remove the turban and take off the crown; this *will* no longer *be* the same. Exalt that which is low and abase that which is high. Eze 21:27 'A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.'

Zedekiah was the “slain, wicked one” in this passage. He spearheaded the rebellion against the King of Babylon. He had broken the “solemn oath.” Zedekiah’s kingship was also slain. In just four years it would be over. The position of the king of Israel would be vacated until the One would “come whose right it is.” That, of course, is a reference to the LORD Jesus, the King of all kings.

d) A Path to Ammon

Eze 21:28 "And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,' and say: 'A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be like lightning— Eze 21:29 while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the wicked who are slain, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end.'

Although Nebuchadnezzar would go to Jerusalem first, Ammon would not be out of the way. The King of Babylon would still swing his sword against the cousin of Israel. But how soon would Nebuchadnezzar attack Ammon. This prophecy would be fulfilled five years after the fall of Jerusalem. The story is told in Ezekiel 25, Jeremiah 27, 48 and 49. But when the Ammonites saw that Jerusalem had been attacked, Zedekiah removed, and Gedaliah was put in charge of the Southern Kingdom, not as king but as governor, the Ammonites devised a plot to kill Gedaliah with the sword.

(1) The LORD Sent Ammon

Eze 21:30 'Return *it* to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you.'

The Ammonites were unable to kill Gedaliah and had to return their sword to their sheath and return to their original homeland to be judged by the LORD.

(2) The LORD Gave Ammon

Eze 21:31 'I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and I will give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction.'

Thinking that Nebuchadnezzar had missed the Ammonites, they retreated to their homes but the LORD made sure Nebuchadnezzar made it to Ammon. The Babylonians were the **“brutal men, skilled in destruction”** that the Ammonites had to face. The LORD was going to help Nebuchadnezzar by blowing on the Ammonites **“with the fire of My wrath.”** In the furnace of the blacksmith’s shop the billows were used to blow on the flame to cause it to burn with great fierceness and cause even metal to melt. So, too, the fire would be billowed to rage against Ammon.

(3) The LORD Forgot Ammon

Eze 21:32 'You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken.'"

We can look to Zephaniah 2:9 to join with Ezekiel 25:5 to speak to this issue. Ammon was about to be literally burned into annihilation. After Nebuchadnezzar’s bout with them **“Nothing but ruins are found here by an amazed explorer. Not an inhabited village remains, and not an Ammonite exists on the face of the earth.”**⁴⁰

6. Ezekiel’s Twenty-sixth Assignment from the LORD

a) Judge the Bloody City

Eze 22:1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Eze 22:2 "And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then cause her to know all her abominations.

It would seem that when the LORD asked Ezekiel twice about the judgment of the **“bloody city,”** it would be a judgment against the capital of Ammon, but it was not. It was a judgment against Jerusalem and the kings who have sat on its throne and caused the city and nations to indulge in such sin. It was time for the LORD to list her crimes.

b) Name the Bloody Crimes

(1) Idol Worship

Eze 22:3 "You shall say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "A city shedding blood in her midst, so that her time will come, and that makes idols, contrary to her *interest*, for defilement! Eze 22:4 "You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and defiled by your idols which you have made. Thus you have brought your day near and have come to your years; therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations and a mocking to all the lands. Eze 22:5 "Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you of ill repute, full of turmoil.

⁴⁰ Thomson, *Land and Book*, 3:622, The New Unger's Bible Dictionary.

Human sacrifice in the realm of idol worship was acceptable throughout most of the world around Israel in the days of Ezekiel. However, the extent of the practice was excessive in Jerusalem at that time even for the surrounding countries. The nation was getting a terrible reputation for their sacrificial practice, specifically concerning children. For that sin, the LORD would not tarry with His punishment much longer.

(2) Shedding of Blood

Eze 22:6 "Behold, the rulers of Israel, each according to his power, have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood. Eze 22:7 "They have treated father and mother lightly within you. The alien they have oppressed in your midst; the fatherless and the widow they have wronged in you.

Beginning with King Manasseh, the most evil of the Southern Kingdom kings, the rulers were to a great extent bloodthirsty. It is thought that Manasseh put Isaiah in a dead tree and had him sawed in half. We could list the evil of each king, some had moments of religious revival in their reigns, but from Manasseh on, they were all bloodthirsty toward parents, strangers, orphans and widows.

(3) Despising of the Sabbath

Eze 22:8 "You have despised My holy things and profaned My sabbaths.

To add to the humiliation of the LORD, the important and holy relics of the LORD and His all important day of rest were despised in the city of Jerusalem.

(4) Slandorous Lies

Eze 22:9 "Slandorous men have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood, and in you they have eaten at the mountain shrines. In your midst they have committed acts of lewdness.

The word “**slandorous**” means *a description of a false statement intended to impair a reputation*. In this case, the lying evidently resulted in the death of innocent beings. Furthermore, the men of Israel who were told to steer clear of “**mountain shrines**” indulged in the meat offered in that place in idol worship. We have discussed the meaning of the word “**lewdness**” several times in this book of Ezekiel. As a reminder, it means *an evil plan*. The people of the city were just that; they “**committed acts**” with an evil plan.

(a) Unholy Relationships

Eze 22:10 "In you they have uncovered *their* fathers' nakedness; in you they have humbled her who was unclean in her menstrual impurity. Eze 22:11 "One has committed abomination with his neighbor's wife and another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law. And another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

What were the evil acts of “**lewdness?**” Unholy relationships! All warned about as sin in the Levitical law. Abominable incest. Enough said.

(b) Bribery and Murder for Profit

Eze 22:12 **"In you they have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord GOD.**

Greed! Murder for money. Injury for money. Oppression for money. All against the law of the LORD. At this point in Jerusalem, there were few who even cared about the LORD any longer.

c) Explain the Bloody Punishment

(1) A Hand Slap from the LORD

(a) A Heart that Cannot Bear it

(b) A Hand that Cannot Take it

Eze 22:13 **"Behold, then, I smite My hand at your dishonest gain which you have acquired and at the bloodshed which is among you. Eze 22:14 "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I will deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken and will act.**

The LORD would not take it any longer. Punishment was due. Even sinners, caught in the very acts of their sin have a heart. The heart that does evil is suddenly softened when danger appears, even in a heartbeat. The revelry and evil of the people of the Southern Kingdom may have satisfied them for a time but when the LORD slapped them with His hand, they would know it. Their hearts would not be able to sustain them, and their hands would not be strong enough to save them. They would be destroyed by the hand of the LORD.

(2) A Scattering by the LORD

Eze 22:15 **"I will scatter you among the nations and I will disperse you through the lands, and I will consume your uncleanness from you. Eze 22:16 "You will profane yourself in the sight of the nations, and you will **know that I am the LORD.**"**

When the LORD slaps them, those who do not die will be scattered across the world. The filth will go with them and they will die at the hands of rulers in other nations. When the LORD said, **"I will consume your uncleanness from you,"** that was the way we would say, *"Southern Kingdom and Jerusalem, you are going to be wiped clean of the sinners in your midst."*

7. Ezekiel's Twenty-seventh Assignment from the LORD

a) Gathered to the Center of Jerusalem

Eze 22:17 **And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Eze 22:18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; all of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace; they are the dross of silver. Eze 22:19 "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because all of you have become dross, therefore, behold, I am going to gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.**

This short assignment for Ezekiel deals with the destruction of those living in Jerusalem. From the previous lesson we discovered that the green trees that surrounded the city would be ignited and the forest would burn intensely. We also learned the fire would travel from the south to the north. Additionally, Nebuchadnezzar would break through the north gate to enter the city. The fire would push the people within the city to the north, Nebuchadnezzar would cause them

to back up to the fire as close as they could. In the center of the city, all the remaining inhabitants would gather. There in the pot, a metaphor that has been used repeatedly in past portions of Ezekiel, the LORD would burn all the inhabitants.

b) Melted in the Center of Jerusalem

Eze 22:20 'As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt *it*, so I will gather *you* in My anger and in My wrath and I will lay you *there* and melt you. Eze 22:21 'I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you will be melted in the midst of it. Eze 22:22 'As silver is melted in the furnace, so you will be melted in the midst of it; and you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath on you.'"

In the midst of the city, with the forest burning without and the structure of the city burning within, the LORD would blow a wind and cause the fire to intensify just as a billow increases the heat in a blacksmith's forge. The wrath of the LORD would burn and consume the sinners in the city.

8. Ezekiel's Twenty-ninth Assignment from the LORD

a) A Land of Indignation

Eze 22:23 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Eze 22:24 "Son of man, say to her, 'You are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.'

The land was filled with indignation. It was filthy with sin. Because of that, the LORD sent a famine to dry up the lands and limit the food resources. This had not happened yet in the timing of this story. It was yet to begin during the next four years. The LORD would be the one to control nature and make this happen.

b) A Conspiracy of Prophets

Eze 22:25 "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her.

The prophets had used their positions in the community for their personal gain of "treasure and precious things." In the process, men, the bread winners for the hour, were killed.

c) A Profaning by Priests

Eze 22:26 "Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

The religious leaders of the community were not better than the prophets. They had changed the Law of the LORD for evil purposes. They had also "profaned" the LORD's possessions. We have not defined the word "profane" to this point in this commentary and we should. The word means *to make common*. In this passage we must understand that the priest of the Temple had become corrupt. They were guilty of taking the holiest of holy utensils of the

Temple and they put them to use at their home tables like common everyday knives, forks, pots and pans. They had taken the ceremonially clean vessels and used them for unclean purposes. Besides that, they had ignored the required rest, the required offerings and the LORD of the sabbath. They had taken the name of the LORD in vain, used Him as an excuse for their actions, proclaimed His name to force people to do things they would not normally do, all in the name of the LORD. They had made the LORD's name so common that it held no holy place in the city.

d) A Violence by Kings

Eze 22:27 "Her princes within her are like wolves tearing the prey, by shedding blood and destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain."

The kings were just as bad as the prophets and priests. They, too, used their power to kill for unjust enrichment.

e) A String of False Visions

Eze 22:28 "Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken."

How had all this happened in the most holy city of the LORD? The prophets had led the way with false visions – all lies. They needed to use only one phrase to convince the people to do what they did not want to do, go where they did not want to go, say what they did not want to say, be what they did not want to be, sin when they did not want to sin – **“Thus says the LORD God.”** Lies! Terrible lies. False visions that the LORD had not said to them, **“Thus says the LORD God.”** Today, because the LORD instilled the *priesthood of the believer* in everyone within the Church, if a religious person ever tells you to do or say something by saying first, *“The LORD told me to tell you,”* chalk it up that he is lying, and run from that person's teaching immediately.

f) A Practice of Robbery and Oppression

Eze 22:29 "The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice."

Here the LORD sums up to Ezekiel the problem with the people left in the city of Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom in general – everyone left had participated in the sins against the LORD. Is this an absolute truth! Had everyone participated in the sins? Yes! How do we know? We know because of the LORD's next statement to Ezekiel.

g) A Lack of Righteous Leadership

Eze 22:30 "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one."

Not one man was found in the city who would **“build up the wall and stand in the gap.”** We might say, *“What about Jeremiah? Wasn't he a man who was willing to build the wall and stand in the gap?”* Yes, he was willing; however, he was not in Jerusalem. He had been taken to Egypt in chains.

h) A Consuming Fire from the LORD

Eze 22:31 "Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord GOD.

Therefore, based on all that the LORD had said to Ezekiel, He was ready to burn the city to the ground. The *elders of Israel* with Ezekiel had not had the opportunity to say one word. To make matters worse, the LORD was not through with His message to them yet in this vision.