

Drums in the Deep

The Lament of Judgment and the Man Who Stands in the Gap

A

1 **22:1** And **the word of the Lord came to me**, saying, ²“And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to her all her abominations. ³You shall say, **Thus says the Lord God**: A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time may come, and that makes idols to defile herself! ⁴You have become guilty **by the blood** that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time of your years has come. Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. ⁵Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you; your name is

B

⁶“Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on **shedding blood**. ⁷**Father and mother** are treated with contempt in you; **the sojourner** suffers extortion in your midst; the **fatherless and the widow** are wronged in you. ⁸You have despised my holy things and profaned my **Sabbaths**. ⁹There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst. ¹⁰In you men uncover their fathers’ nakedness; in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity. ¹¹One commits abomination with his neighbor’s wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father’s daughter. ¹²In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord God.

C

¹³“Behold, **I strike my hand** at the dishonest gain that you have made, and at the **blood** that has been in your midst. ¹⁴Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it. ¹⁵**I will scatter** you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and **I will consume** your uncleanness out of you. ¹⁶And you shall be profaned by your own doing in the sight of the nations, and **you shall know that I am the Lord.**”

defiled; you are full of tumult.

- 2 ¹⁷And the word of the Lord came to me: 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 dross of silver.

¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.²⁰ As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. ²¹I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it.²² As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the Lord; I have poured out my wrath upon you.”

- 3 ²³And the word of the Lord came to me: ²⁴“Son of man, say to her, You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation. ²⁵The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. ²⁶Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. ²⁷Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. ²⁸And 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. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice. ²⁹The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. ³⁰And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.

³¹Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord God.”

Ezekiel 22

The Requiem of Judgment

The **Requiem Mass** is a traditional Catholic liturgical service for the repose of the souls of the departed named after its opening words: *Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine* (“**Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord**”).

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) was an English soldier and poet widely regarded as one of the greatest voices of WWI literature. Sent to the Western Front in 1916, with others such as Tolkien, he endured the horrors of trench warfare, including gas attacks and prolonged exposure to death, which led to shell shock and his hospitalization a year later. While there, he met fellow poet **Siegfried Sassoon**, who became his mentor and encouraged him to continue perfecting his poetry. Though virtually unknown in his lifetime, his poems vividly depict the pity, futility, and dehumanization of war, rejecting patriotic glorification in favor of raw compassion for its victims. He returned to the front in 1918, was awarded the Military Cross for bravery, and was killed in action on Nov 4, 1918, at just 25 years of age.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) was one of the most influential British composers of the 20th century. A lifelong pacifist and conscientious objector during WWII, Britten

was commissioned to write a piece for the reconsecration of [Coventry Cathedral](#), which had been destroyed in a German bombing raid on Nov 14-15, 1940, during the Blitz. Britten seized the opportunity to create a bold anti-war statement, interweaving the traditional Latin Requiem Mass texts with nine poems by Owen.

Taking over a year to write, [War Requiem, Opus 66](#) premiered on May 30, 1962. It is exhaustingly long, approximately 80-85 minutes from start to finish. And [that's kind of the point](#). It is a large-scale choral-orchestral requiem with soprano, tenor, and baritone soloists, mixed chorus, boys' choir, full orchestra, chamber orchestra, and organ. It is highly dissonant, uses conflicting scales and modes that clash with the choir's more grounded chords, has "crippled" (intentionally weakened, distorted, and unstable) tonalities with odd time signatures such as 7/4 meter, and its atonal-leaning harmonic language centers around the tritone C-F#--the infamous "[diabolus in musica](#)" (the devil in music, a term that myth dates back to the medieval church as the "Satanic" cord because of its extreme dissonance and tension that saw the church ban its use in church music). The overall effect of the combined Requiem Latin Mass and Owen's English texts is a prolonged, haunting elegy (the poetic/song

version of a eulogy)—draining in its intensity, building to moments of despair and fragile hope. It’s often described as **the 20th century’s definitive musical protest against war**. Here is an example of its lyrics. The Tenor first appears and sings from Owen’s “Anthem of Doomed Youth”:

*What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls’ brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.*

(Chorus)

*Kyrie eleison. (Lord, have mercy.)
Christe eleison. (Christ, have mercy.)
Kyrie eleison. (Lord, have mercy.)¹*

¹ Benjamin Britten, *War Requiem*, Op. 66. Texts from the Latin Requiem Mass and Wilfred Owen. Boosey & Hawkes, 1962.

As we approach the end of the extremely long oracles of judgment against Judah section of Ezekiel 12-24, which will come to a crescendo in 24's siege of Jerusalem and simultaneous death of the prophet's wife, I confess that **I've grown weary of the war talk**. It has become **exhausting** to think about and preach. And we still have a couple more chapters to go. But again, **I think that's the point**. You are *supposed* to feel like that. It is the literary equivalent of the infernal drumbeat and march of the inescapable army that at first is so far away you can only hear, then comes over the horizon many miles away to your sight, inevitably closer and closer, terrifyingly louder and louder until war is upon you.

This was depicted well in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (which just came out with its 25th anniversary theatrical release) when the Fellowship, inside the mines of Moria, stumble into a chamber with a tomb. "***Here lies Balin, son of Dudin, Lord of the Moria.***" "**He is dead, then. It's as I had feared,**" Gandalf says, suddenly but carefully lifting the rotting remains of a book from the white stone slab. It has been slashed and stabbed, and appears to be covered in dried blood. The pages crack and break as he opens it.

"We must move on, we cannot linger," Legolas urgently whispers to Aragon.

Gandalf reads the final page. “They have taken the Bridge and the second hall: we have barred the gates ... but cannot hold them for long ... the ground shakes ... drums in the deep ... we cannot get out. A shadow moves in the dark. Will no one save us? They are coming.”

Unnerved, Pippin backs away. He stumbles against the well, sending a precariously balanced armored skeleton tumbling in! Merry reaches out, Grabbing hold of Pippin before he falls. The Fellowship freeze in a stunned silence as the armored skeleton clatters down the deep well ... echoing loudly!

“Fool of a Took! Throw yourself in next time and rid us of your stupidity!” Gandalf reacts in anger. They fall silent. A low rolling boom rises from the depths below ... growing louder ... BOOM ... BOOM ... as if the caverns of Moria were turned into a vast drum. A great horn blasts nearby ... Answering horns ... running feet ... harsh cries.

“Orcs!” Legolas states. And the doom is upon them.²

As I’ve been thinking about these many chapters, especially as its own woven subunit within Ezekiel’s book, the thought struck me when we were in ch. 19 and its *qinah*

² Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, and Peter Jackson. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. Internet Movie Script Database (c. 2001), 92-93.

dirge or lament that forms a 3-2 repeating longer-shorter meter, that this fits exactly with the rhythm of these chapters, with all the even chapters being longer *three column weaves* followed by the odd chapters being shorter *two-column weaves*. In other words, the architecture of the literary structure its itself, like the Requiem, *an exhausting extremely long lament about war!*

But my mind, yet again, goes to our own culture here, for unlike so many of *the protest songs* of the 60s that sprang up within just a handful of years after the *Requiem* regarding another war—Vietnam—the attitude of which is exemplified so perfectly in the famous lyric, “*War, what is it good for? Absolutely nothing / Say it again,*”³ (And for that war, in fact, yeah, maybe!), there actually *is* a purpose to the war that is coming upon Jerusalem. *That purpose is our drum-beat.*⁴

Our passage is Ezekiel 22. As all the even chapters are, it is a three column woven text. Each of its three rows open with the prophetic formula (“*the Word of the LORD came to me*”) followed by a *diagnosis of what Israel has become.*

³ *Edwin Starr*, “War,” Written by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong. Motown (1970).

⁴ Some form of the phrase appears in *Ezek 5:13; 6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 9, 27; 11:10, 12; 12:15, 16, 20; 13:9, 14, 21, 23; 14:8; 15:7; 16:62; 17:21, 24; 20:12, 20, 26, 38, 42, 44, 21:5, 22:16, 22; 23:49; 24:24, 27;* and on into the oracles against the nations up until 39:28.

First, they are a guilty, bloody, defiled city. Second, they have become dross—a worthless alloy. Third, they have become an unclean land. Those are the ideas that bind the first column together.

The **second** column **catalogues** a core indictment of total moral failure. Row 1 lists every kind of social, religious, sexual, and economic sin. Row 2 details the impure composition of the dross (bronze, tin, iron, lead, etc.). Row 3 catalogues the systemic corruption of all the classes from the prophets to the priests, to the princes, to the false prophets, to the people and concludes that “no intercessor” is to be found.

Finally, the **third** column presents us with the **escalating judgment** and outpouring of wrath. Row 1 announces a scattering, consuming uncleanness, profanation and that you shall know that I am the LORD. Row 2 is active smelting (gathering, blowing fire, melting, pouring out wrath so that you shall know that I am the LORD). Row three is God’s final pouring out of indignation, consuming them with the fire of his wrath, where their own conduct is returned on their heads. We’ve seen very similar things in the three columns prior to this—because that’s how the lament

works across the chapters. Each row is in one form or another, chiasmic, showing that they are each independent units even if they are woven together to create a larger picture.⁵

Row 1 (Ezek 22:1-16): The Bloody City – Guilty and Defiled

“And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying...” (Ezek 22:1). The Word must be a *person*, because it is redundant and absurd to say that the word said something. That’s what all words do. Therefore, this is Christ in the OT. “And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to her all her abominations” (2). The questions are *rhetorical*. Yes, you *will* judge them. Contrary to our age which completely takes Jesus out of all his context when he says, “Do not judge,” there is a place for judging. That place is not the hypocritical judgment that does the very things it accuses others of doing (Rom 2:1). It is that of righteous judgment, such as a prophet to the people who calls them out in a covenant lawsuit for failing to meet the terms of their covenant with the King.

⁵ See RS (“Ezekiel 22:17-22”) and Admin (“Ezekiel 22:23-31”) *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Sept 25, 2017; Sept 26, 2019). Row 1’s chiasm follows the three columns as an A. Opening address (1-5), B. Cataloging of sins (6-12), A’ Divine Response (13-16).

“You shall say, Thus says the Lord God: A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time may come, and that makes idols to defile herself!” (3). Israel is guilty of **two sins: shedding blood**—that is being violent, especially towards the innocent. This is called murder. Second, and parallel, she has **made idols** and these idols defile her. Why? Because the worship of the gods, as we have seen in previous chapters, is spiritual adultery. Adultery makes one ritually unclean. It is sin of the darkest and worst kind, especially spiritual adultery when one is in covenant with Yahweh.

Vs. 4 restates it and then **adds** to it. “**You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time of your years has come. Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries.**” This verse with the previous clearly show that there is **a direct correspondence between their violence and their worship of the gods, and between their sin and their judgment.** Where you see great violence, especially in mobs, the worship of false gods is surely not far behind.

Then there is the result. These **sins bring “her time” to an end.** It is a time appointed by God. He will not be mocked

by his people forever. Therefore, he has made her a reproach. All the other nations mock Israel. They betrayed their God; therefore, he despises them. Fools! **Vs. 5** repeats that. “Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you; your name is defiled; you are full of tumult.” Tumult is an uproar, confusion, commotion. It describes what is about to happen in Jerusalem.

Next, we come to our **first catalogue**— every kind of social, religious, sexual, and economic sin. “Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood” (6). The **princes** are the kings. They are nearly all evil. They are hell-bent on violence and shedding innocent blood.

Next, we get a feel for the kind of shedding of blood it likely was, and it absolutely infuriates God. “Father and mother are treated with contempt in you” (7a). Father and mother are the most basic foundational roles in a society. And of course, this refers to the Fifth Commandment—the first command in the Second Table. Their role is no longer recognized. Attacking the core of the family unit is the chief and first way the enemy attacks a civilization from within.

“The sojourner suffers extortion in your midst” (7b). We should probably think for a moment about this one, since it is so badly confused with the orchestrated military

invasion of illegals that were brought, bussed, and flown into western nations in recent years by the tens of millions, on purpose, in order to destabilize the West in the war *we* are currently facing.⁶ It is [Minnesota “niceness”](#) and spiritual naivety that can’t understand, ironically, that the very people they champion as heroes of the plight of the alien are actually the ones exploiting them for their own political advantage, as exemplified by Ilhan Abdullahi Omar, a Muslim Somali congresswoman who married her own brother just to get to our country, then quietly divorced him, married a broke businessman, and suddenly went from having about \$50,000 in assets to a year later being worth over \$30 million.⁷

[A *gēr* is a resident alien, foreigner, or immigrant](#) who lives among Israelites, but it not a native. They are vulnerable outsiders, without family ties, tribal protections, or full legal rights. They are dependent upon the community’s hospitality and justice. Our own country was built on them.

⁶ In the kind of news most are not seeing and wouldn’t believe even if they did, here’s [a link](#) on X from Adam Johnston showing a U. S. State Department official admitting this very point [and another](#) from Eva Vlaardingerbroek reposted by President Trump explaining this “Great Replacement,” [and another](#) from Avery Daye further explaining the ramifications. These came across my feed at “random” just this past week. There are thousands more just like them.

⁷ It is being [widely reported](#) and now investigated, including the billions and billions that they have money laundered while taking advantage of the Somali population in MN. And to cover it up? They create violence in the streets against those who are simply trying to enforce the laws, all in hopes of not getting caught.

The church and civilization has a duty to not extort or squeeze or make life unfair for these people, but this is a completely different issue from not allowing the laws of your country regarding criminals and criminal behavior to be enforced or creating laws that reverse discriminate, which God hates (Lev 19:15). We are a moment in our own culture where clarity on these very matters is apparently at the same place Israel's was, and that is part of the war we are facing. We confuse criminality and being law-abiding, we encourage dependence rather than independence, we side with those who exploit and call it love, and this all has a cumulative effect upon true sojourners where they get lumped in with criminals and this makes their life almost impossible. All while the magistrates enrich themselves as they intentionally sow seeds of division and foster and manipulate this confusion.

Next on the list, “The fatherless and the widow are wronged in you” (7c). Again, more of the most vulnerable in the society. People take advantage of those who cannot take care of themselves. Children who are forced into labor, sold into slavery, physically and sexually abused. Women without the means of caring for themselves forced to do unspeakable things. It's the worst kind of abuse.

Vs. 8, when read in **context**, means that they do all of this while feigning to be spiritual. “**You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths.**” Isaiah said something very similar in **Isaiah 58:13**. Amazingly, in neither place does this refer working on the sabbath, which is how it is often applied (you do find that in **Neh 13:15–22**). It refers to *worshiping* God on the Sabbath *while you exploit others during the rest of the week!* It is **empty formalism** that is oblivious to its own insensitivity to caring about the Second Table of the law and loving your neighbor as yourself. It’s legalistic hypocrisy.

This interpretation is **reinforced** by what comes next, for the sabbath is sandwiched between ethical failures towards others. “**There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst**” (9). Do you see the **connections** of breaking one commandment and then another? They hate, so they slander. They slander in order to murder. They murder because they hate. On the other hand, they eat on the mountains, meaning they worship at a high place and do it by committing sexual immorality at the shrines while then also going to temple to worship on the sabbath! Again,

we see that relationship between the worship of the gods and violence and now, sexual immorality. Incredible!

“In you men uncover their fathers’ nakedness; in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity” (10). These are specific sexual and ceremonial sins under the Levitical code. To uncover your father’s nakedness is not homosexuality, as some often interpret the idea with Ham and Noah. It is sleeping with your father’s wife (either your mother or step-mother; Lev 18:7-8; 20:11), something you might do to humiliate your father or to steal his authority through a new bloodline. The menstrual laws are found in Lev 15:19-30, but are also in the very same place as the father’s nakedness (18:19; 20:18). Israel had to remain ceremonially unclean, and blood was a form of defilement under that code, because the loss of blood was associated with death, and death is unclean—the opposite of life.

But let’s say a little more. The next verse says, “One commits abomination with his neighbor’s wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father’s daughter” (Ezek 22:11). This continues the list of sins in Leviticus 18 (vv. 9, 11, 15, 20) and 20 (vs. 10, 12, 17). Those two chapters are basically parallel to each

other, and form the **double curtain (in and out)** of the entrance of the Most Holy Place (ch. 19) as the weave of Leviticus is formed. Another way of thinking about it is that they are the divine protector chapters like **the Cherubim on the lid** of the ark to God's law. When you violate them, there is nothing left remaining in your heart to keep you from breaking anything.

Finally, **“In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord God” (Ezek 22:12)**. You can hear how violent they had become. Blood keeps reappearing. This time in association with **taking bribes**, reminding me in many, many ways of precisely what we are seeing unfolding in Minnesota at the present moment, and what I believe will soon sweep across our nation as more and more fraud, money laundering, and bribery is being uncovered.

And the final punch? Just like our own nation and so many of our churches—**we have forgotten God**. The First Commandment. And remember, to forget him is not necessarily to give up being religious! In fact, just like them, we too are a deeply religious people, many often still pretending they worship God—but it is not the God of Holy Scripture,

even if they call him by the same name. In total, we have between 7-10 of the Ten Commandments listed here (1st-forgetting God, 2nd-idols, 4th-sabbath, 5th-parents, 6th-blood, 7th-adultery, 9th-false witness; implied are 8th-stealing, 10th-covetous gain, 3rd-profaning holy things). Israel is totally corrupt.

We come finally to **the result** of all this. **God's judgment.** "Behold, I strike my hand at the dishonest gain that you have made, and at the blood that has been in your midst" (13). The church must hear, it is *God* who strikes. What is coming is not random, accident, chance, or fate. It is not karma. It is God—*the God of Love*. How could a *loving* God bring about such disasters? It's a question asked by many, including many in the Bible. Why? Because war is horrific!⁸ That was the point of how we began this morning. Here, the answer is that God is striking as a direct reaction *to their* dishonest gain that they have made. In other words, this is justice. They brought this upon themselves. True love never

⁸ I'll just keep this to a note, but if you know anything about warfare, you know that it has evolved over time. Today, the military talks about fifth generation warfare. This is warfare beyond physical violence; warfare that is waged on the level of ideas and the minds of people. When you see a culture go literally insane from ideas, that is fifth generation warfare in action. The crazy screaming purple haired lesbian white woman meme is a perfect sign. What many fail to realize is that they have become victims of fifth generation warfare. It is not normal. This is not the way virtually any women used to be. It is war. And it is devastating and terrifying in its effects. It is also deeply spiritual and needs much prayer to combat. For if it is a war of words, what can fight it save the Word of God alone?

lets justice slide, for it knows the consequences to everyone are worse than the war-disaster itself. **What people fail to realize** is that when you have wickedness go unchecked for so long, that when finally justice comes, people often are no longer able to see it for what it is. Then they end up blaming the executor of justice, when the people who have committed the crimes are actually the ones to blame. It's called blindness.

We are presently watching a whole segment of our population show the world that they are incapable of seeing the truth of this. That's the same thing that we saw in ch. 21 with Israel. But when the disaster comes, and *it is coming*, **“Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it” (14)**. That's a terrifying verse for any age, but especially one where God is finally going to clean up the messes of sin with justice rather than grace. As the requiem sings, **“Kyrie eleison! Christie Eleison!”**

“I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will consume your uncleanness out of you” (15). Do you see that **the goal** of this judgment is to consume and purify Israel's uncleanness? That's actually *mercy*. But when people get so cemented in their sins, they

can't understand that. But God tells them ahead of time so that they can hear **the drumbeat** that now reasserts itself. “**And you shall be profaned by your own doing in the sight of the nations, and you shall know that I am the Lord**” (16). Drums in the deep. They are coming. God will be known among the people, whether they want it or not. For he is God.

Row 2 (17-22): The House of Israel – Worthless Dross in the Furnace

We arrive suddenly at the much shorter **second section** of the chapter—Row 2. “**And the word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to me...’**” (Ezek 22:17-18a). **Dross** is worthless metal. Perhaps Polonium-210 is a great example. Extremely rare, highly toxic, and radioactive, it is present in minute quantities in the earth's crust, soil, atmosphere, etc. But we create it artificially through neutron irradiation in a nuclear reactor. To a regular person, this is the ultimate form of dross—not only worthless, but dangerous.

The middle column gives the short catalogue: “**All of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace;**

they are dross of silver” (18b). When silver ore, obviously a highly *valued* metal, is melted, the goal is to create pure silver. These metals—bronze (an alloy), tin, iron, and lead—are the common impurities or base elements found in silver that float to the top as slag and scum in the smelting process. Relatively speaking, and especially in this form as slag, **they are worthless**. That’s Israel because of the list in the former row: their accumulated sins have turned what was once precious into worthless dross.

Now we are presented with **God’s response**. “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem” (19). To be gathered in this metaphor means that *Jerusalem* is about to become a smelting furnace.

“As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you” (20). **God is going to melt his people** in the smelting furnace of his wrath. Verse after verse hammers the same image: gathering, blowing, melting, pouring wrath. “I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it. As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the

midst of it...” (21-22a). That’s the kind of repetition that makes these chapters so exhausting and overwhelming. They should make us cry out again, *Kyrie eleison!*

Why? The drumbeat again, “and you shall know that I am the Lord; I have poured out my wrath upon you” (22b). This is not the god so many Christians today worship. But it is the God who made them and who will not be mocked.

Row 3 (23-31): The Unclean Land – Conspiracy and Corruption

The final row now comes to us. Longer than the one we just saw, but not as long as the first, it is marked by the same, “And the word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, say to her, You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation’” (Ezek 22:23-24). As John Walton notes, when you think of rain and wrath together, the most obvious passage that comes to mind is the Flood, and both the Babylonian Talmud (b. Zeb. 113a) and a fourth century midrash interpret this as referring to the waters of the Flood, which have not submerged the land of Israel.⁹ Given that God said he would never flood the world again, this makes

⁹ John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 453.

the metaphor all the more striking. God may not bring a literal flood upon Israel, but the rains of his wrath are going to cleanse the land on his day of indignation as it washes away the filth of their sin.

But first, [the final catalogue](#) in Col. 2. These catalog [the systemic corruption of all the classes](#) from the [prophets](#), to the [priests](#), to the [princes](#), to the [false prophets](#), to the [people](#). [Vs. 25](#) begins, “[The conspiracy...](#)” I’ve been asked I don’t know how many times, [why I believe in conspiracy theories](#), of course almost always by people who don’t. My answer remains unwavering. Because I believe *the Bible*, especially as it describes human depravity. Scholars have actually written books on conspiratorial thinking, especially as it concerns our country. One says,

Not just a sideline to a mainstream politics of reasonable discussion and rational exchange, conspiracy thinking has long occupied a central place in American politics. America is, in fact, embedded in it. From the anti-Freemasonry and anti-Catholicism of colonial America, to the recurrent nativism of the nineteenth century, to the McCarthyism and Cold War nuclearism of the twentieth century, major political movements in the United States have been informed by fears

of conspiracy as well as by the actual need to engage in conspiracies to combat threats to national sovereignty. Indeed, one might say that conspiracy thinking produces America as a nation: it provides narratives that tell Americans who ‘we’ are.¹⁰

Rather than condemning this as irrational, paranoid, or dangerous (the typical mainstream/liberal dismissal), Dean emphasizes **conspiratorial thinking’s productive role**: it shapes political subjectivity, public formation, and responses to perceived threats or exclusions.¹¹ In fact, it was actually a *subversive* element within the CIA that only in my lifetime made “**conspiracy theory**” a four-letter word, when they popularized the phrase that until then had always been quite benign, calling anyone who questioned their narrative of the JFK assassination a “**conspiracy theorist**.”¹² Remember when **George Bush**, whose father was once CIA Director said, “**Let us never tolerate outrageous conspiracy theories concerning the attacks of Sept 11, malicious lies that attempt to shift the**

¹⁰ **Jodi Dean**, “Declarations of Independence,” *Cultural Studies & Political Theory*, ed. Dean (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000), 291.

¹¹ For more see **Douglas Van Dorn**, *Conspiracy Theory: A Christian Evaluation of a Taboo Subject* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2020).

¹² A full transcript of the report is an appendix in my book. See also Ch. 2.

blame”?¹³ And then there’s William Casey, a former director of the CIA once said, “We’ll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the US public believes is false.”¹⁴ And people wonder why I think the things I do.

Ironically, Thomas Jefferson long ago said, “Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper. Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle ... I will add, that the man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them.”¹⁵

But it isn’t just our society. It is Ezekiel who said, “The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey...” (Ezek 22:25a). “Conspiracy” (*qesher*) means a conspiracy, plot, treason, or alliance often with negative intent. It is often secretive and clandestine so that others will

¹³ George W. Bush, “[Let Us Never Tolerate Outrageous Conspiracy Theories](#),” *C-Span* (Nov 10, 2001).

¹⁴ William J. Casey, first staff meeting, 1981. The source of the quote comes from Barbara Honegger (former assistant to the chief domestic policy adviser to President Reagan) who told it to Senior White House correspondent Sarah McClendon, who made it public. I learned this back in 2020 from the excellent work done tracking this down by Melissa Melton, *The War on Liberty*, at the now defunct (taken down?) site: <https://thewaronliberty.com/william-casey-well-know-our-disinformation-program-is-complete-when-everything-the-american-public-believes-is-false/>.

¹⁵ *Letter from Thomas Jefferson to John Norvell*, Date: June 11, 1807, Page 2 of 3, Source Collection: The Thomas Jefferson Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1: General Correspondence. 1651-1827, Microfilm Reel: 038. It’s interesting, I found this quotation looking up the origin one said to be from Mark Twain, “If you don’t read the newspaper you are uninformed. If you do read the newspaper you are misinformed.” This Twain quotation is, ironically enough, fodder for its own small conspiracy theory. Fact is, he never said it.

not be aware of it. They are real, because human beings are evil.¹⁶ Here, it is the prophets of God.

Prophet is the first great office of the OT. What have they done? “They have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.” You have to understand. The meaning is that this was a deliberate, unified plot or alliance of many prophets to exploit and harm the people rather than guide them righteously. They did this on purpose. And—listen carefully—they did it by convincing the people *that there was no conspiracy*, that everything was fine, and that they were the good guys. They conned them in to believing a lie. They mislead them. They were the ones who claimed to speak for God. But they didn’t. “‘Peace,’ they say, when there is no peace” (**Ezek 13:10**). They used their spiritual leverage and authority to purposely lie to and harm the most vulnerable. Reminds me of TV preachers in many ways. They rob poor widows. They rob the temple itself. They rob God of his proper oversight of his own people, by telling them lies about what he said.

¹⁶ Ron Funches has a [great short bit](#) about not believing in conspiracies in one of his stand-up routines. This is the cleanest, shortest version I could find. And it’s pretty funny.

We move to **the priests** next. The **second great office**. Prophet, *priest*... “Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them” (26). These were the most basic tasks of the priests. After his sons were killed in the fire by God’s wrath, Aaron was commanded, “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean” (Lev 10:10). And on its heels, “... and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses” (10b). The fact that this comes on the heels of the first **two priests being incinerated** for refusal to do these very things makes Ezekiel’s indictment all the more damning. They knew better. They didn’t care. They didn’t believe God would do anything.

Next up is **the princes**. This is the **third office**: Prophet, priest, and *king*. “Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain” (28). This is virtually a repeat of what we’ve already seen, but now it comes as part of a laundry list of sins committed by all the various important people of Judah. The

imagery is violent. **Wolves tearing prey** is a disturbing image to say the least, because they do it in packs (it is again part of a conspiracy) and their lust for blood is not satiated until all the meat is consumed.

Vs. 28 seems to return to the prophets. “**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. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice**” (28). You can hear that there is a **collusion with prophets and princes**, for prophets do not oppress; that’s the job of the magistrate. But this shows the extent of the conspiracy. Offices are working together in conjunction to enrich themselves at the expense of God, his word, and his people. That’s how you create confusion. That’s how you destroy a civilization.

Then comes the perhaps the one that unexpected. “**The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery**” (29). I suppose you could read this as a summary of the three offices, but no. I think it refers **to all the people**. There is *no one* who does good, not even one. The corruption created by the conspiracies has been so effective that the people themselves have been seduced and bewitched and now

they are as corrupt as their leadership. As Jeremiah said of this same generation, “An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so” (Jer 5:30-31). This is precisely why we see people behaving in so many of the frankly insane ways that they are today too. They are following their deeply corrupt leaders in churches, governments, and entertainment.

Suddenly, “And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none” (30). Prophets were intercessors. Priests were intercessors. Kings were intercessors. *None of them* would stand in the gap to stave off God’s judgment. **Josiah**, the last great king, is long dead. The **few prophets** who actually speak for God are in Babylon. There is no intercessor to be found **to stand in the gap like Moses did** when God got so angry at the people who were sinning at the foot of the mountain at the same moment God delivered his holy law at the top.

Thus comes the judgment. This is the moment **the drum-beat stops**. That means war is upon them. It is a single concluding verse to this part of the lament. “**Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed**

them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord God.” Though it is an imperfect tense in Hebrew, conveying something in the future, the ESV puts it in our **past tense**. This is because it is a prophecy (a “prophetic perfect”) and God’s prophecies are certain. Therefore, it reads like past tense, because it simply will occur. Nothing can stop it.

There is no “**so that you may know that I am the LORD**” now. There is only the returning upon their heads their own way, something that takes us full circle to having brought their days to an end (**vs. 4**). That is **karma, kind of**. You get what you deserve. Fate has a way of coming back around. But karma is totally impersonal; just an inevitable law of a cold random universe. But not this. This is God judging people for their sins which they so rightly and justly deserve. And the result? It is horrific. It is war. It is terror. It is calamity. It is confusion. It is tumult. It is disarray. It is death. Because that’s what sin deserves. Because all sin is an affront to God. That’s the cacophony of our long dirge beginning to come to a dissonant conclusion.

No One to Stand in the Breach?

But **can we end our sermon here? We must not.** For I believe there's something more in the next to last verse. Because in not being able to find anyone, no one at all, this must foreshadow not only the finality of the judgment to come in the final verse, but also *the need for something greater*. Someone who will stand in that gap. Someone must stand in the gap. But who?

Beloved, he has come, but long after Ezekiel went the way of his fathers. For the same Word of God who continued proclaiming this message of devastation that would be poured out in his wrath upon his own people, **was never an end to itself**. But rather, he himself would come in the flesh to be the one—the only one—who at the end of the day, breaches that infinite distance between sinful men and a holy God. For he is both man—albeit perfect—and God in human flesh. And so God himself steps in with great grace for his people. *He took God's wrath for you*. Have you trusted him? Have you bowed your knee to him? Have you believed the good news?

In the NT, we learn that Jesus intercedes for us as **God's true prophet**. **Acts 3:22-23**, “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you ... and it shall be

that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.” Hebrews begins, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (**Heb 1:1-2**).

Jesus intercedes for us as **our high priest**. Paul says, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (**1Tim 2:5**). Hebrews says that he now “always lives to make intercession for them” (**Heb 7:25**) and in Romans it adds, because he is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (**Rom 8:34**).

Jesus intercedes for us as **our King**. Ezekiel himself will later predict, “I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David ... I the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them” (**Ezek 34:23-24**). Pilate put up the sign telling the world that Jesus is “the King” (**Luke 23:38**). In Revelation we learn, “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’” (**Rev 19:16**). And so now “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to” Jesus (**Matt 28:18**).

Jesus is the one our passage anticipates. He is the one who **removes the warfare** between God and the people. His sacrifice has atoned for our sins. His resurrection has given us new

life through faith. So while you feel the weight, rightly, of our remaining chapters on Israel's judgment oracles, and even as they may drive you mad having to continue hearing the drumbeat, also know that many of them, maybe all of them, are [constantly pointing you forward to faith](#) in the beloved Son, for he is the only one in whom the wrath of God is removed from us. And when that wrath is removed, then we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ([Rom 5:1](#)).

Bibliography

- Britten, Benjamin. *War Requiem*, Op. 66. Texts from the Latin Requiem Mass and Wildfred Owen. Boosey & Hawkes, 1962.
- Bush, George W. "[Let Us Never Tolerate Outrageous Conspiracy Theories.](#)" *C-Span* (Nov 10, 2001).
- Casey, William J. first staff meeting, 1981.
- "[CIA Document 1035-960: Concerning Criticism of the Warren Report.](#)" *JFKLancer.com* (April, 1967). Link is from the Wayback Machine as this site is also dead.
- Daye, Avery. "[Europe is being conquered.](#)" @AveryDaye (Jan 21, 2026).
- Dean, Jodi. "Declarations of Independence." *Cultural Studies & Political Theory*. Ed. Jodi Dean. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000: 285-304.
- Funches, Ron. "[Ron Funches Talks About Conspiracy Theories.](#)" @funnieststandup (Jan 2019).
- Jefferson, Thomas. [Letter from Thomas Jefferson to John Norvell, Date: June 11, 1807, Page 2 of 3, Source Collection: The Thomas "Jefferson Papers at the Library of Congress, Series 1: General Correspondence. 1651-1827, Microfilm Reel: 038.](#)" *Library of Congress*. Accessed Jan 24, 2026.

- Johnston, Adam (h/t @Project_Veritas), “[U.S. State Dep. Official Additting Mass Immigration Designed to Change US Demographics](#),” @adamkjohnston on X (Jan 23, 2026).
- RS (“[Ezekiel 22:17-22](#)”) and Admin (“[Ezkiel 22:23-31](#)”). *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Sept 25, 2017; Sept 26, 2019).
- Starr, Edwin. “War.” Written by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong. Motown (1970).
- Van Dorn, Douglas. *Conspiracy Theory: A Christian Evaluation of a Taboo Subject*. Dacoco, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2020.
- Vlaardingerbroek, Eva. “[Great Replacement No Longer a Theory](#),” @realDonaldTrump on Truth (Jan 23, 2026).
- Walsh, Fran; Boyens, Philippa; and Jackson, Peter. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. *Internet Movie Script Database* (c. 2001),
- Walton, John H. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel 4*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.