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A Day of Terror in the Valley of Vision

22: 1-14

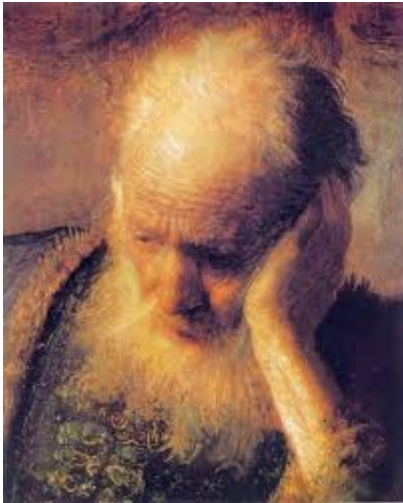
A day of terror in the valley of vision DIG: What will happen to Jerusalem? How would you describe the quality of leadership Jerusalem had? How would the people respond to the threat of enemy attack? What is wrong with such stockpiling for war? With danger all around them, why did they have an “eat-drink-and-be-merry” attitude (22:9-13)? What does such revelry show about their trust in God? Their hope for the future? Their inner character? Why are they no different than the people of Babylon (see 21:5)? How would their attitudes and actions be different if they had responded as God desired? Compare 22:13 with Ecclesiastes 8:15. In what ways do these passages differ?

REFLECT: What evil regimes in our society seem ripe for judgment today? Would you weep over their callousness as Isaiah did in 22:4? Or would you inwardly cheer that they finally “got what was coming to them”? Why? Consider the popular music, movies, and politicians and how they react to threats like nuclear war, political instability, and an uncertain future. Where do you see the revelry reflected in those signs of the times? Consider your own response to such stressful issues. Are you any less cynical? Less apathetic? Are you more prayerful? Or proactive?

It is said that revelries and parties marked the last nights of Berlin in April of 1945. The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra played Wagner’s *The Twilight of the Gods*. There was a general air of: **Let’s eat and drink, for tomorrow we die**. The inflated promises of National Socialism to bring the millennium - the thousand-year Reich - had disappeared in dust and ashes. The Russian army was on the Oder River, just a few miles to the east, and to the west, German soldiers were surrendering in the thousands to the victorious Allies. The war was lost. But instead of national repentance or even reflection, there was only an attempt to forget in waves of artificially-induced giddiness.

From one point of view, such a response is not surprising. What was there to repent of? The Kaiser’s army in World War I had at least made a pretense of trusting in God, as their uniform belt buckles had stamped on them “Gott Mit Uns” or *God With Us*. Hitler’s armies made no such pretense. They had abandoned **ADONAI** who Nietzsche had accused of

turning men into old women, and had tried to revive the harsh gods of Norse and Germanic legend. But their real god was simply the god of power. Now cruel fate had turned against them, and the fickle god of power had gone off to fawn on their enemies. What's to repent of?



For starters, there were an estimated fifty million people dead, including six million Jews. The culture and spirit of Europe lay in ruins, with the spirit, in particular, hard-pressed ever to recover. Germany, the land of Luther, had, like Judah many centuries before it, become a **Valley of Vision**, where a glorious past of spiritual insight had been forfeited and the claims to see true reality were in fact a mockery.⁷⁰ In **a near historical prophecy, Isaiah** prophesied about the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians 115 years later (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Gb - The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC**). **He** is distraught over what **he** sees and weeps **bitterly**.

An Oracle concerning the Valley of Vision (22:1a). The Valley of Vision is Jerusalem. **Jerusalem** itself sits on top of a mountain. But all around **Jerusalem** there are mountains surrounding it, so it gives the appearance of a valley. It is called **the Valley of Vision** because it is where **Isaiah** received **his** prophecies.

What troubles you now, that you have all gone up on the roofs (22:1b). The condition of **Jerusalem** is *fear*. Suddenly fear strikes **the City** as the call goes out of the coming danger. The people run to the rooftops to see the approaching army that is coming to destroy **the City**. This is the Oriental city in commotion. The flat **roofs** were used not only for promenading (**Second Samuel 11:2**), but also as places of general gathering in times of excitement, just as we gather in the streets. From the **roofs** the inhabitants were

accustomed to look down into the streets or far off on the roads. This could not be done from the windows, as these seldom opened onto the street. The prophet represents the entire people assembled on the tops of their houses. Whether for mere curiosity, or to assail the invaders, or to indulge in idolatrous worship, these gatherings on the housetops give a striking illustration of Oriental customs.⁷¹

O town full of commotion, O city of tumult and revelry (22:2a)? It is the Babylonian army. Notice the contrast. One day they were full of **commotion**, a tumultuous **city** of joy. Now, suddenly, they are filled with fear as they look across the walls of **Jerusalem** at the approaching army. **Your slain were not killed by the sword, nor did they die in battle (22:2b)**. When **Jerusalem** begins to fall, **the people** will not even have the honor of falling on **their** swords **in** the heat of **battle (First Samuel 31:1-13)**. No, the dead do not die **by the sword**, from the glory of battle, but from hunger (**2 Kings 25:3; Jer 52:6; Lam 1:19 and Isaiah 49, 2:19, 4:4-5**).

All your leaders have fled together; they have been captured without using a bow. All you who were caught were taken prisoner together, having fled while the enemy was still far away (22:3). Those who do succeed in **fleeing** the city only fall captive to the Babylonian army waiting for **them**. **The Jewish rulers**, including the king, are not only weak, but **they** are the first to run (**Second Kings 25:4-5 and Jeremiah 52:7-8**).

Therefore, I said: Turn away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me over the destruction of my people (22:4). **Jerusalem abandons herself to mirth and revelry while the prophet, who knows the future, is plunged into deep sorrow and gloom**. **Isaiah** gives **himself** up totally to **weeping**. The Hebrew word here means *to be thoroughly exhausted from bitter weeping*. The reason is the imminent destruction of **his people**, and **he refuses to be comforted**. In **Chapters 40 to 66** of **his** book there will be nothing but comfort, but for now there is nothing but bitterness.

Adonai, ELOHIM of heaven's armies (CJB), has a day of tumult and trampling and terror in the Valley of Vision, a day of battering down walls and of crying out to the mountains (22:5). The name **Adonai** means *lord, master or owner*. **Jerusalem** was being destroyed, and **the people** inside the **walls** could do nothing about it. **They** realized that the enemy advancing to the very **walls** of **Jerusalem** was a **day of judgment** brought on by **God Himself**. The attack was not by accident; it had come because of **the people's** disobedience. In **the city, the people** were terrified as **they** saw the enemy camped outside waiting for an opportunity to attack.

Elam takes up the quiver, with her charioteers and horses; Kir uncovers the shield

(22:6). The armies come from the areas of **Elam** and **Kir**. This is the area of Mesopotamia, from which Babylon had risen.

Your choicest valleys are full of chariots, and horsemen are posted at the city gates; the defenses of Judah are stripped away (22:7-8a). The **valleys** around Jerusalem were choked with the armies of the enemy, and **she** staggered on the brink of destruction. **Horsemen** were **posted at the city gates** so that no one from inside could escape safely, or to press the attack if **the city gates** were breached. **Jerusalem** was helpless.

You would think that in such a precarious position the nation would turn back to **God** and repent. Obviously, **the city** could not save **itself**. But at the very moment when **a people of vision** should have been looking to **God** for protection and deliverance, **they** were depending on **their** own strength. Judah had been blinded from the coming danger. **They** were so self-assured they made no preparations for any lengthy siege. Now that the armies have arrived, **they** try to make quick preparations, but it was too little, too late.

King Hezekiah had turned to prayer 115 years earlier when King Sennacherib had his Assyrian armies at the gates of Jerusalem (**37:14-20**). But here, King Zedekiah now faced with the same situation turns from relying on **God** to relying on self. This was exactly the kind of leadership that got him in trouble to begin with. Now with his back literally to the wall, he tried to fortify the city in many of the ways that King David and King Hezekiah had done previously. **And you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest (22:8b)**. He looked to **the weapons in the Palace of the Forest** instead of to **God**. This was the royal armory built by King Solomon (**First Kings 7:2-6, 10:17-21**). But there were not enough weapons.

You saw that the City of David had many breaches in its defenses; you stored up water in the Lower Pool (22:9). When he saw that **the City of David had many breaches in it**, he collected **water in the Lower Pool** and worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall (**Second Chronicles 32:4-5**). **You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall (22:10)**. He demolished private **houses** that had to be torn **down** in order to **strengthen the wall**. Not only did the **wall** have **many breaches in it**, but also the lower pools had not been supplied with enough water. **The Old Pool** or **the Pool** of Salome, which had been leaking, had only recently been repaired and it was too late to have it filled. **You built a reservoir between the two walls, for the water of the Old Pool (22:11a)**. But not being able to fill **the Pool** of Salome was not the root cause of Judah's problem.

But **Judah's** real problem was that **she did not look to the One who made it, or have**

regard for the One who planned it long ago (22:11b). *The real failure of Judah was not to trust God for protection.* We have the same choice today. Is it prudent to have dental insurance, life insurance, health insurance, and car insurance? Of course it is, but it cannot replace our ultimate security in **the LORD**. In **Messiah**, we are truly in good hands. **Jesus** said: **no one can snatch them out of My Father's hands, the Father and I are One (John 10:29).**

Adonai, ELOHIM of heaven's armies, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth (22:12). When **the people** saw the enemy **they** should have repented, realizing **they** were helpless before the Babylonian army. Pulling **out their hair (Ezra 9:3; Nehemiah 13:25)** and wearing **sackcloth** were signs of mourning. To make the head bald, or to shave or pluck the beard was a sign of mourning among the Hebrews and many other nations.⁷²

But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! But instead of mourning **they** lived it up in **revelry**, banqueting, and **drinking wine** in the face of **their** impending death. They said: **Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die (22:13)!** **The Hebrew use of the infinitives to eat and drink implies continuous and excessive indulgence in revelries and orgies. The sentence may have been the slogan of the reckless revelers who would enjoy themselves while they could, for life was short and death might come at any moment. It may also be the prophet's scornful thrust hinting at their impending doom.**

In rabbinical writings this is the source of teachings on the second death in **Second Chronicles 36:15-16** where the writer gives the reason for the Babylonian captivity. The writer says that **God** kept sending prophets like **Isaiah**, but that **the people** kept rejecting and mocking them **until the wrath of ADONAI was aroused against His people and there was no remedy.**

Finally, **God revealed Judah's** judgment for failing to heed **His** call to repentance: **Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for, says Adonai, ELOHIM of heaven's armies (CJB).** Their **sin** would **not be atoned for** until **they** died (22:14).