

August 24 Answers

- 1) The exiles refused to believe that God would cut off everyone from the holy city of Jerusalem. After all, the city had seen two **deportations** already (604 and 597 BC), and there were still princes, priests and prophets left. Surely the presence of a few **righteous** people would save the city. In reply, God said that a flashing **sword** was poised to strike, and it would cut off both “the righteous and the wicked” (Ezek 21:2–4). The upright people who remained could not save the city from God’s avenging sword. They, like Daniel and Ezekiel, would be **removed** from Jerusalem, and the city would sit forsaken and alone (Lam 1:1). This teaches us that there comes a time when the sins of a city or nation must be punished, and the righteous can no longer **hold** back the tide of judgment. How important it is to be **salt** and **light** while there is still time! Ezekiel went on to list all the sins of the “blood city” (Ezek 22:2). It wasn’t just idolatry that had brought God’s avenging sword; the people were murderers, adulterers, and thieves. They profaned the Sabbaths and oppressed widows and orphans. They despised their parents and committed all kinds of sexual immorality. The priests had done violence to God’s law, the prophets had lied in God’s name, and the princes had killed to gain more wealth. God said, “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. Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them” (Ezek 22:30–31). This teaches us that a righteous leader can sometimes turn a city or a nation from the path of destruction. May we always be that kind of leader! Ezekiel told the story of Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem), two sister-cities who “played the **whore** in their youth.” The graphic depiction of their wickedness teaches us that idolatry is like **adultery**. When we **trade** God for something else, we commit spiritual prostitution, and when we **join** ourselves to unbelievers, we commit spiritual whoredom (Ezek 23:14–17). We must strive to make sure that we never join Christ with **Satan** (2 Cor 6:14–15)!