The prophet Elisha cried out, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” (2 Kings 2:14); this cry came when Elijah’s mantle fell upon him as Elijah ascended into heaven on a chariot of fire (see 2 Kings 2:15).

The question today is not, “Where is the God of Elijah?” for He is where He has always been--- sitting on His throne as sovereign Lord; the question today is, “Where are the Elijah’s of God?”

In Ezekiel 22:30 God says, “I sought for a man...;” James tells us “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours...” (James 5:17); there was nothing special about Elijah; while he witnessed the power of God on Mount Carmel, yet when his life was threatened by Jezebel, he ran for his life (1 Kings 19:1-3); at one moment he had courage to confront the prophets of Baal with the power of God, but when his life was threatened he ran; where was his confidence in God then?

In spite of his weakness, God used him to become one of the greatest of all prophets; yet he had “a nature like ours.”

In Ezekiel 22, God tells Ezekiel that He is looking for a man to stand in the gap; that is between Him and the people; this man was to plead on behalf of the people that God would give the people more time to repent and thus be spared from the judgment to come; Ezekiel could not be that man as he was not in Jerusalem where such a man was needed.

This calling of God is a paradoxical; while we want to say with John the Revelator, “Come quickly Lord Jesus,” we are also called to stand on behalf of sinful men in a sinful nation and plead that God would give more time for mankind to repent before His judgment falls; you may have family that does not know the Lord so you plead that God give them more time for them to repent; it should be our desire that no one should perish, but that all come to a knowledge of the truth.
Before we hear the call for men to stand in the gap, Ezekiel takes up the cause of God to send His judgment.

The Scorching of the Forest and the Song of the Sword (20:45--22:32)

The scorching of the forest (20:45-49)

The allegory against the south (20:45-48)... A reference to Jerusalem being set on fire by the Babylonians as they would approach the city from the north and move to the south.

The answer of the exiled elders (20:49)... The Hebrew text says: “Is he not speaking a riddle of riddles?” The elders were making fun of his serious messager; people mock at the gospel; the word “hell” is used flippantly to speak mostly of what is good; “Jesus Christ” has been made a swear word; the presence of a cross makes atheists so nauseous and sick they file lawsuits to have it removed.

The sword of the Lord (21:1--22:32)

The drawing of the sword (21:1-5)... When the judgment comes God will take the sword out of His sheath and no one will be spared, not even the righteous; Ezekiel is told to groan with a broken heart and sigh with bitterness before their eyes (21: 6-7).

The dance of the sword (21:8--17)... Here you have the “Song of the Sword” (vv5 8-10); judgment is coming so Ezekiel asks the elders, “Shall we rejoice…?” (v 10 NIV); the people are in disbelief as Ezekiel does a war dance with the sword as he makes mockery of their unbelief, while at the same time illustrating God as a Mighty Warrior (see Exodus 15:3).

The design on the ground (21:18-32)... Ezekiel is told to draw two roads on the ground with the sword for the king of Babylon to take; one to Rabbah (Ammon, Jordan) of the Ammonites and another to Jerusalem; he makes a road from Babylon and then it becomes a Y-junction; road signs are put up to give him direction.
Both cities will be under attack; it is of interest to note that Jerusalem and Ammon signed their first peace treaty in 589 BC to ally themselves against Babylon; it was on October 26, 1994 that Israel and Jordan signed their second peace treaty that is binding to this day.

Ezekiel tells the elders that when Nebuchadnezzar reaches the fork in the road he will use divination to determine which road to choose; it will be the road to Jerusalem (21:20-22); for Nebuchadnezzar the signs were clear as the omens revealed that victory was assured; it would be Jerusalem and then Rabbah.

The designation of the problems (22:1-5; 25-29)... First he tell the elders the Holy City will become Blood City (vvs 1-5); then he spells out the problems that bring its destruction:

1. The princes or royal family ripped off the people financially and spiritually (22:25)
2. The priests were guilty of violating the law they were expected to uphold (22:26).
3. The politicians had disregarded the people they were expected to lead (22:27).
4. The prophets had proclaimed a message of false visions and lying divinations (22:23-28).
5. The people were guilty of extortion, robbery, oppressing the poor, and mistreating the aliens (22:29).

The Society that Broke Down (22:6-22)

The detailing of societal breakdown (2:6--12)

Deterioration of the family (22:7a)... Children showing no respect for their parents.

1. No “rod and reproof” in discipline (Proverbs 29:15)
2. No responsibility to “train up” a child by bring them under submission (Proverbs 22:6).
3. No restraint by the parents in discipline (Ephesians 6:4).
4. No respect on the part of the children for their parents and the ways of God (1 Timothy 3:2b,4b).

Disregard for the less fortunate (22:7b)... 

Disobedience to God’s laws (22:8)...
Dishonoring the marriage bed (22:11)...

Disrespect for others (22:12)...

The discipline of God (22:13-22)

The scattering of the people among the nations (22:15)...

The scrap that Jerusalem has become (22:18a)...

The Smelter who melts Israel like metal in the midst of a furnace (22:20)... God is the Smelter who puts Israel into a furnace to melt away the dross; the discipline of God can be severe (see Hebrews 1:5-11); He wants His people to be holy, like pure gold and silver and not covered with the dross of sin (see Malachi 3:2-3).

The Search for a Gap Man (22:30-31)

The imperative for a gap man (22:30-31)... To plead for God’s mercy to extend the time before judgment; to get people to “turn from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

The identification of the gap man (22:30)...

1. One of commonness... “So I sought for a man among them…”
2. One of commitment... “… who would make a wall…”; That is to build a barricade with the purpose of stemming the tide of sin; to confront the evil of society.
3. One of courage... “… to stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land…”
4. One of consecration... “…stand… before Me…”

The indifference of the people... “but I found none” (22:30).

The Stand of Ezekiel (23:1–24:27)

Ezekiel qualified as a gap man:
He was a man who cared (23:1-49)... Ezekiel gives the allegory of two adulterous sisters representing two cities; one sister was named Oholah (her tent) and represented Samaria; the other city was named Oholibah (my tent in her) and represented Jerusalem or Judah.

Both sisters were married to God as His covenant people; in their youth they engaged in prostitution by giving themselves to foreign gods; Oholah (Samaria) was stripped naked by Assyria; Oholibah (Judah) would soon be stripped naked by Babylon; God is going to discipline them because they forgot Him.

Sister Oholibah never learned from the sins and consequences of her sister Oholah; 136 years before Jerusalem fell, she had been stripped naked by Assyria; Jerusalem will be stripped naked for the same reasons, but they never thought it would happen to them; she thought she could get away by playing the harlot.

God waits for us to repent but we should never try His patience (Ecclesiastes 8:12-13).

It is a terrible thing to be unfaithful to God, but how much worse to be forgetful --- to never think of Him; yet Ezekiel shows his care for Oholibah (Judah) that she not go the way of her sister.

He was a man who dared (24:1-14)... He tells the parable of the rusty cooking pot; he begins by giving the very day that Nebuchadnezzar would begin his 18 month siege of Jerusalem; it would be the ninth year, the tenth month and the tenth day of the month of the reign of King Jehoiachin (24:1-2); that would be January 15, 588 BC; he does this about four years before the invasion.

Judah was like a scummy, unclean cooking pot filled with raw meat; as the meat is cooking the scum from the pot gets mixed with the meat making it inedible; the cook pours out the meat and leaves the pot on the fire to melt; the scummy melted pot is Jerusalem and the discarded inedible meat stew is her citizens (24:3-13).

Ezekiel dared to tell the crowd the bad news; he would not back off from telling the people what they didn’t want to hear (v 14).

Ezekiel was a man who shared (24:15-27)... God is going to take his wife from him ‘who was the desire of [his] eyes” (24:16,21); Ezekiel told of her impending death
to the exiles in the morning and in the evening she died; he was told not to weep or mourn in public (22:16).

The message here: as Ezekiel’s wife was the desire of his eyes, so Jerusalem was the desire of the people’s eyes; as Ezekiel’s wife died, so would Jerusalem die and be buried; after Jerusalem’s fall it was no time to mourn for they had been warned this day would come; if they wanted to mourn they should have mourned over their sins before the destruction; they should have heeded the advice of Isaiah, “Seek the LORD while He may be found” (Isaiah 55:6).

Even in the death of Ezekiel’s wife it was business as usual (v18).

Today, God is still calling men and women to stand in the gap; He is looking for ordinary people like Elijah who had a nature like ours, but who was willing to be used of God. Do you care? Do you dare? Do you share? Are you willing to be that person?