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Ezekiel 21.

(2014)

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Ezekiel 21.

Topics.

- The LORD has drawn his sword from its sheath.
- The sword of the LORD is coming.
- A sword is sharpened and also polished ready for slaughter.
- The sword for the great slaughter.
- The sword of the LORD is the king of Babylon.
- The LORD will make Jerusalem a ruin.
- The Ammonites have false visions and divine lies.
- The LORD will deliver the Ammonites into the hands of Babylon.

Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel: Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the “likeness” of the LORD. Ezekiel was keenly aware of God’s presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God’s covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (ch. 37) is a classic picture of God’s ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

NOTE.

Ezekiel’s message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

Introduction: at this time Ezekiel has been in captivity to Babylon seven years (Ezekiel 20:1). The sword of the LORD is the king of Babylon and his armies who will perform the LORDS judgement on Jerusalem and the Ammonites.

The LORD has Drawn His Sword from its Sheath.

Ezekiel 21:1-5 ----- ¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²"Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries. Prophesy against the land of Israel ³and say to the land of Israel, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am against you and will draw my sword from its sheath and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked. ⁴Because I will cut off from you both righteous and wicked, therefore my sword shall be drawn from its sheath against all flesh from south to north. ⁵And all flesh shall know that I am the LORD. I have drawn my sword from its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again.

Son of man: means mortal man.

Ezekiel is told to prophesy that the LORD is against the Sanctuary (Holy Place in KJV) and the land of Israel. The LORD is pictured as a warrior who has his sword in its sheath which He will withdraw and cut of the righteous and the wicked from south to north.

The sword of the LORD: is the King of Babylon (v19).

Righteous and the wicked: in this context the righteous applies to the people of Israel (who are actually corrupt), but they are called righteous simply because they considered themselves righteous in contrast to the Gentiles who were considered by the Jews an unclean people without God.

The Sword of the LORD is Coming.

Ezekiel 21:6-7 ----- ⁶As for you, son of man (Ezekiel), groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan before their eyes. ⁷And when they say to you, 'Why do you groan?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that it is coming. Every heart will melt, and all hands will be feeble; every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming, and it will be fulfilled,' " declares the Lord GOD.

The LORD uses Ezekiel's life as a sign. Throughout the book of Ezekiel the LORD often uses dramatic actions in Ezekiel's life as signs to: -

- Get the attention of Israel.
- Depict the condition of the entire nation of Israel.
- Picture future events that are about to come upon Israel.

In this instance it is a picture of future events, Ezekiel is told to weep with a breaking heart and when asked why he is in such sorrow and grief to tell the people the sword of the LORD is coming. When the LORD removes His sword from its sheath the following destruction will horrify those that see it and cause their hearts to melt and their knees to be as weak as water.

A Sword is Sharpened and also Polished ready for Slaughter.

Ezekiel 21:8-13 ----- ⁸And the word of the LORD came to me: ⁹"Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus says the LORD; Say: "A sword, a sword is sharpened and also polished, ¹⁰sharpened for slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! (Or shall we rejoice? You have despised the rod, my son, with everything of wood.) ¹¹So the sword is given to be polished, that it may be grasped in the hand. It is sharpened and polished to be given into the hand of the slayer. ¹²Cry out and wail, son of man, for it is against my people. It is against all the princes of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with my people. Strike therefore upon your thigh. ¹³For it will not be a testing—what could it do if you despise the rod?" declares the Lord GOD.

These are horrific words a sword (the King of Babylon) (v19), is sharpened and also polished ready for slaughter in the hand of the slayer against the LORD'S people, the king and his officials (this is the LORD'S sword).

You have despised the rod, my son: means Israel has refused to listen to the prophets and respond to His discipline by worshipping wood (idols).

It will not be a testing: means it will be total destruction.

The Sword for the Great Slaughter.

Ezekiel 21:14-17 ----- ¹⁴As for you, son of man, prophesy. Clap your hands and let the sword come down twice, yes, three times, the sword for those to be slain. It is the sword for the great slaughter, *which surrounds them*, ¹⁵that their hearts may melt, and many stumble. At *all their gates* I have given the glittering sword. Ah, it is made like lightning; it is taken up for slaughter. ¹⁶Cut sharply to the right; set yourself to the left, wherever your face is directed. ¹⁷I also will clap my hands, and I will satisfy my fury; I the LORD have spoken."

The sword which surrounds them at all their gates: refers to the armies of Babylon, they surrounded the walls of Jerusalem for nearly two years so no-one could go in or out to get food. The famine became so great that women were eating their own babies to survive (one of the curses of the covenant).

Woman eat the fruit of their womb: when Israel entered into the covenant with God Moses told them if they faithfully obey the God and keep His commandments God would set them high above all nations of the earth and they would be overtaken with abundant blessings (Deut. 28:1-2). But if they do not obey God and do not keep His commandments then curses would come upon them and overtake them (Deut. 28:15). One of these curses was that famine in their land would be so great they would suffer the following horror to survive: -

- You will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. ⁵⁴The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left, ⁵⁵so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. ⁵⁶The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces, to her son and to her daughter, ⁵⁷her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns (Deut. 28:53-57).

Eventually Israel rebelled against God and turned to gross idolatry, astrology and occultism. They not only had altars for worshiping the host of heaven (the sun, moon, stars and planets) in the court of the temple and worshipped at the altars of Baal, but were even sacrificing their sons on the altars of Molech in the Hinnom valley.

Added to these abominations they were shedding innocent blood, cheating the innocent out of justice, not helping the less fortunate and oppressing the poor for their own gain all of these gross wickedness's permeated the land of Judah and Israel. Because of these great sins of Israel and Judah the following curses of the covenant came upon them: -

- Look, O LORD, and see! With whom have you dealt thus? Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? (Lament 2:20).
- The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people (Lament 4:10).

Most believed the book of Lamentations to be an expression of grief over the fall of Jerusalem when the fierce armies of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon surrounded the city of Jerusalem for two years so that no one could go in or go out so that the famine within Jerusalem became enormously great. Eventually Babylon invaded Jerusalem and burned its homes, pillaged the temple of all its sacred items, gold and silver and took the people of Jerusalem into captivity for seventy years.

The following verses show that the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel warned the people of Israel that this famine and horror would come upon them if they did not repent and turn from their gross wickedness.

- And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbour in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them (Jer. 19:9).
- Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers. And I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds (Ezek. 5:10).

The Sword of the LORD is the King of Babylon.

Ezekiel 21:18-25 ----- ¹⁸The word of the LORD came to me again: ¹⁹"As for you, son of man, mark two ways for the *sword of the king of Babylon* to come. Both of them shall come from the same land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to a city. ²⁰Mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites and to Judah, into Jerusalem the fortified. ²¹For 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 teraphim; he looks at the liver. ²²Into his right hand comes the divination for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth with murder, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build siege towers. ²³But to them it will seem like a false divination. They have sworn solemn oaths, but he brings their guilt to remembrance, that they may be taken. ²⁴"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you (Israel) have made your guilt 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 shall be taken in hand. ²⁵And you, O profane wicked one, prince of Israel (Zedekiah), whose day has come, the time of your final punishment,

Rabbah of the Ammonites: Rabbah was the capital of the Ammonites in Samaria, they were fierce in nature, rebellious against Israel, idolatrous in their religious practices, given to brutish murder and their chief deity was Molech (for further information on Molech see the title: "Molech" after verse twenty-eight).

Ezekiel is told to make a signpost and place it at the fork of the road, on the signpost mark the way to Rabbah of the Ammonites and the way to the fortified city of Jerusalem so the king of Babylon will clearly know the way to the Ammonites and Jerusalem when he comes with his armies.

God is basically saying it is His will that the Ammonites and Jerusalem be slaughtered to destruction He is going to unsheathe His polished sword Babylon and guide their armies to the land of the Ammonites and the fortified city of Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon Seeks the Will of the gods of Babylon.

It is interesting to notice that even though Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon used divination (seeking knowledge by supernatural means, omens or oracles) the shaking of arrows, consulting the teraphim (ancient household god) and looking at the liver of an animal to find the will of the god of Babylon and by these kinds of divination the king is led to go against Jerusalem. It was not only God's will that he did, but God was using him as His polished sword.

When the inhabitants of Jerusalem hear of the king of Babylon's intention they mistakenly believe the king has had a false divination, but because of their overwhelming guilt before God they will be taken into Babylonian captivity. The armies of Babylon used battering rams against the gates in the walls of the city and set up sieges against the towers and slaughter the people.

The LORD will make Jerusalem a Ruin.

Ezekiel 21:26-27 ----- ²⁶thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown (referring to Zedekiah king of Jerusalem). Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. ²⁷A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, until he (Nebuchadnezzar) comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him.

The Lord tells the king of Jerusalem (referring to Zedekiah) to take off the crown because everything in his world is about to change.

Exalt that which is low: refers to Babylon, they were classed as an inferior people to the Jews.

Bring low that which is exalted: refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they saw themselves as superior to all nations, but the LORD will give Nebuchadnezzar the power to bring Jerusalem to ruin.

THE FOCUS IS NOW THE AMMONITES.

Ezekiel 21:28 ----- ²⁸And you, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach; say, A sword, a sword is drawn for the slaughter. It is polished to consume and to flash like lightning

Ammonites: were fierce in nature, rebellious against Israel, idolatrous in their religious practices, they were given to brutish murder and their chief idol was Molech.

MOLECH: both the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the Ammonites were sacrificing their children to Molech. The statue of Molech stood in the valley of (the son of) Hinnom (the Hebrew word for Gehenna) which was a valley of Jerusalem. Molech was so tall that he appeared as if he were staring down from a throne of brass. Fire in the pit beneath the hollow statute would blaze with a loud roar, tongues of flame would reach up and lick around the edges of Molech's open mouth and a column of smoke would billow high into the air and be seen from some distance.

The arms of Molech reached upward and out as if waiting to be filled they formed a steep incline that ended in Molech's open mouth. Priests would bring a child to be sacrificed to Molech and chant, Molech, Molech, Molech and the frenzied crowd would also chant Molech, Molech, Molech to the throbbing beat of drums. While the priests and the crowd chanted to the pounding rhythm of drums, the chief priest faced Molech with his arms raised, pleading with the god in a frenzied cry, when the chief priest finished his prayer, he would lower his arms and lift the child sacrifice in the air.

The chief priest would then toss the child into the monsters waiting arms the child would roll down the hot and smoothly polished arms and into Molech's open mouth and the roaring fire and flames would devour the sacrificial child. In the New Testament Gehenna the Valley of Hinnon where the statute of Molech stood became a very appropriate symbol for the horror and total destruction of the human body, soul and spirit.

How God must have wept as His heart was torn in grief as He looked down on His people doing such cruel and horrific things to the LORD'S Children. Is it any wonder that the LORD is about to unsheathe His Polished Sword ready for Slaughter, the people of Jerusalem and the Ammonites by their gross wickedness have forced God to judge and punish their nations.

The Ammonites have False Visions and Divine Lies.

Ezekiel 21:29 ----- ²⁹while they (the Ammonites) see for you (Israel) false visions, while they (the Ammonites) divine lies for you (Israel) —to place you (Israel) on the necks of the profane wicked, whose day has come, the time of their final punishment.

The people of Jerusalem were following the false visions and divine lies of the Ammonites.

The Lesson for Today:

Men professing to know God can have visions and prophecies which they claim are from God, but that does not always mean they are, we should always be willing to listen but never to accept everything as being of God until we have examined a thing for ourselves, the inhabitants of Jerusalem faithfully followed their king and their priests and were led into destruction.

The LORD will Deliver the Ammonites into the Hands Babylon.

Ezekiel 21:30-32 ----- ³⁰Return it to its sheath. In the place where you (the Ammonites) were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you. ³¹And I will pour out my indignation upon you; I will blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and I will deliver you into the hands of brutish men (Babylon), skillful to destroy. ³²You shall be fuel for the fire. Your blood shall be in the midst of the land. You shall be no more remembered, for I the LORD have spoken."

The LORD will use Babylon to destroy the Ammonites.

Return it to its sheath: means the slaughter is finished it is done.

End.