

Chapter 21 is regarded by many as the most important chapters in Ezekiel. God makes it clear that the last of the Davidic line will be removed in judgement by the king of Babylon. There will be no king of the Davidic line in Jerusalem until Messiah comes. He was presented as King in His first advent, but rejected and He will be King over Jerusalem and the nations when He returns.

PARABLE OF THE SWORD OF THE LORD

21:1-5 *“And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ‘Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and speak against the sanctuaries and prophesy against the land of Israel; and say to the land of Israel, ‘Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am against you; and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked. Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore My sword will go forth from its sheath against all flesh from south to north. Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath. It will not return to its sheath again.’””*

The short parable at the end of chapter 20 began to describe this one. In both we see that the righteous and unrighteous will be affected. It’s primary focus is dealing with the temporal while it has eternal implications. **“Behold, I am against you”** - God is patient but He must appease His wrath. While there have remained a faithful remnant the whole of the nation, as we have seen, remains wicked and stiff-necked. The discipline will be intended to purge the nation in the context of “this age” or “this world”. The final wrath of God carried out on Israel will result in a completely redeemed and faithful Israel in the age to come.

The Lord’s focus is on the holy city, the holy sanctuary and the holy land. The city represents the pride of the Davidic dynasty; God’s capital city. The sanctuary represents the presence of God with His people through the priesthood and the land extends to all of the tribes. Every aspect of the kingdom will be cut off in this judgement until Messiah restores it.

Ultimately God’s wrath was appeased in Christ not only for the future Millennial reign of Christ, but for the redeemed forever. In the church today, we don’t live in the fear of God’s wrath because there is no longer any condemnation on those who are in Christ. But that doesn’t mean we can’t still be impacted by the fall out of God’s judgement being brought to bear upon nations.

“My sword” - Is Nebuchadnezzar and the nation of Babylon.

21:6-7 *“As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight. And when they say to you, ‘Why do you groan?’ You shall say, ‘Because of the news that is coming; and every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will happen,’ declares the Lord GOD.”*

It’s hard to imagine actual judgement when it is merely promised. Ezekiel though has been shown exactly what will be of Israel’s near future and the Lord continues to give him direct revelation. The full weight of the immediate danger for his people is pushing down on him. We have not been given the day or the hour for

the day of the Lord, but that should not change our outlook upon the lost around us.

21:8-13 *“Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the LORD.’ Say, ‘A sword, a sword sharpened and also polished! Sharpened to make a slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! Or shall we rejoice, the rod of My son despising every tree? It is given to be polished, that it may be handled; the sword is sharpened and polished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.’ ‘Cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against My people, it is against all the officials of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with My people, therefore strike your thigh. For there is a testing; and what if even the rod which despises will be no more?’” declares the Lord GOD.”*

Babylon has been prepared and strengthened as God’s instrument and when the final siege comes the destruction will be swift like lightning when it flashes. This is similar to the description used of the return of the Lord (Matt 24:27; Luke 17:24) when He visits destruction upon the wicked of the earth. **“The rod of my son”** is the scepter of Judah, God’s son (see Ex 4:22; Hsa 11:1) cannot rejoice in the midst of the certainty of the swift and total destruction that will come at the hand of the Babylonians. No one will escape the sweeping judgement and Judah will be a state no longer, from the common people to the princes. **“Strike your thigh”** is a sign of great lament (Jer 31:19).

21:14-17 *“You therefore, son of man, prophesy and clap your hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword for the slain. It is the sword for the great one slain, which surrounds them, that their hearts may melt, and many fall at all their gates. I have given the glittering sword. Ah! It is made for striking like lightning, it is wrapped up in readiness for slaughter. Show yourself sharp, go to the right; set yourself; go to the left, wherever your edge is appointed. I will also clap My hands together, and I will appease My wrath; I, the LORD, have spoken.”*

Ezekiel is told to express the prophecy with the clapping of the hands for effect. It is to get the attention of the audience, not with cheerful clapping, but with one swift loud clap like that of smiting a bug. God is expressing His indignant fury. The **“sword doubled the third time”** is a reference back to the threefold calamity of judgement on the city, the sanctuary and the land; effecting everyone. While the Lord uses human instruments, He expresses His own emotion as He sounds out the thunderous clap of His own hand. The judgement will not be done until the wrath of God is appeased.

21:18-23 *“The word of the LORD came to me saying, ‘As for you, son of man, make two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city. You shall mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem. For 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 household idols, he looks at the liver. Into his right hand came the divination, ‘Jerusalem,’ to set battering rams, to open the mouth for slaughter, to lift up the voice with a battle cry, to set battering rams against the*

gates, to cast up ramps, to build a siege wall. And it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes; they have sworn solemn oaths. But he brings iniquity to remembrance, that they may be seized.”

“They have sworn solemn oaths” - the sons of Ammon and Judah were not friends but they had conspired together against Babylon around 590 B.C.. As the Babylonian army had marched along the ancient routes, they came to the point where the road branched off in two ways, one leading by the south, by Tadmor or Palmyra, to Rabbath of Ammon, east of Jordan; the other by the north, by Riblah in Syria, to Jerusalem.

“Into his right hand came the divination, Jerusalem” - it was typical for the pagan kings to use divination to determine decisions. Nebuchadnezzar would use arrows, his idols and an animal liver to determine major decisions and the Lord knowing these things had “arranged” for the divination to determine the destruction of Jerusalem.

While the Lord doesn’t sanction these actions He is sovereign in all things. It says in Proverbs that *“The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps”* (16:9). And *“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD”*.(16:33). **“A false divination in their eyes”** - the Jews reaction to this prophecy of divination directed by the Lord was that it would not happen.

21:24-27 *“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have made your iniquity 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 will be seized with the hand. And you, O slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end,’ thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Remove the turban and take off the crown; this will no longer be the same. Exalt that which is low and abase that which is high. A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.’”*

Ezekiel never calls Zedekiah “king” but instead always refers to him as “prince” since he is a vassal king. While Ezekiel doesn’t consider him a true king of Israel he still stands in that office and will be seized, have his eyes pierced out and taken to Babylon. **“Exalt that which is low and abase that which is high”** - Zedekiah is then contrasted with the Messiah. The Lord will bring the false representative of David’s throne to nothing and with that the destruction of Judah. This devastation will be a conditional reality for Israel **“until He comes whose right it is”** (shiloh) - that is when Messiah is installed as King.

When Jacob issued final blessings to his sons (the 12 tribes) they came with prophecies and that which was given to Judah in Genesis 49:10 says *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”* Shortly after the birth of Jesus, the political situation in Rome began to shift. The vassal kings (Herodian) under Rome began to lose authority to the procurator or governor established by Rome to rule in Jerusalem. After Herod Archelaus was banished (6-7 A.D.), Procurator Caponius moved to restrict the legal power of the Sanhedrin and they lost the adjudication of capital cases. This authority was actually maintained by Judah even under Babylonian captivity.

The Babylonian Talmud records the mourning of the priests - *“Woe unto us for the scepter has departed and the Messiah has not come!”* In this lament they believed that the Word of God had actually failed

without realizing that Jesus, who had already been born King, was growing up in Nazareth and would be presented as King to Jerusalem on the day predicted by Gabriel to Daniel. After Zedekiah no one has sat as king on David's throne and Ezekiel is saying that no one will be able to do so except Messiah. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father until His enemies are to be made His footstool when He comes to rule (Ps 2; Isa 2:1-4; Mat 3:2).

21:28-32 *“And you, son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,’ and say: ‘A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be like lightning— while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the wicked who are slain, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end. Return it to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you. I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and I will give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction. You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken.’”*

The Ammonites assumed that they avoided the fury of Babylon and in order to continue to evade future attack they conspired to set up another false government in Jerusalem in order to keep the focus off of Ammon. But five years later, they were destroyed for aiding Ishmael in usurping the government of Judea against the will of Nebuchadnezzar (2Ki 25:25; Jer 41:15). **“while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you”** - The Ammonites were guilty of the same self sufficient pride and false promises of peace and protection that Judah was. Their fate was exactly the same as God judges all.

As this prophecy of Ammon's destruction is given it is lacking the promise of restoration that Israel is repeatedly given. While there may be physical descendants of the Ammonites alive during the kingdom age, the land will be part of the land granted to Israel during that time. Ammon will come up again in chapter 25 as one of the nations judged by Jesus. Ammon had rejoiced at Judah's fall along with the Edomites. Most of the neighboring nations of Israel will be judged by God in subsequent chapters in Ezekiel for this same reason; they hate Israel and have desired their destruction.