

The Sword of the Lord

Then The Messiah Comes Next, part 2

We began our last study by reading two verses in the book of Genesis. The first verse was Genesis 3:14-15. It says,

The LORD God said to the serpent,

...

And I will put enmity

Between you and the woman,

And between your seed and her seed;

He shall bruise you on the head,

And you shall bruise him on the heel.

Genesis 3:15 (NASB)

There is a lot in this verse that we could talk about. Verse 15 is about a curse that was pronounced on Satan because he deceived Eve, motivating her to sin. The most important part of the curse is that enmity would

exist between Satan and “her seed.” The phrase “her seed” refers to our Savior, Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul explains in Galatians 3:16 that “seed” refers to Christ. The ancient Jewish rabbis believed this verse referred to the Messiah, but they interpreted the details differently.¹ We agree that this

verse refers to the Messiah who is our Savior Jesus Christ, who is our great high priest. He is the Messiah-Priest.

Then we visited Genesis 49:10. Here is the verse,

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.

Genesis 49:10 (NASB)

The Hebrew word for scepter refers to a king’s staff. Here we are told the Messiah will come from Judah. The Hebrew word for “Shiloh” is an important word because *siloh*,

probably means “until he comes into his own.” It could also mean ‘to whom it belongs’ or “his due.” The common message is that the one who holds the scepter will eventually be given what is justly His. What justly belongs to him? The answer

is given to us when we are told that everyone will obey Him. That reveals He will rule the world. This prophecy is about a Messiah-King.

SECOND STUDY OF EZEKIEL 21. Our study today is from Ezekiel 21:18-32. This is the second part of our study



1 Risto Santala. The Messiah In the Old Testament. Karen Ahvah Meshihit.

Jerusalem. 1992. p. 37-38.

in this chapter. In the last study, we read verses 1-7, which is the first prophecy in the chapter. There in verse three, Yahweh told the prophet Ezekiel to announce that He had unsheathed His sword. The verse says,

“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.” Ezekiel 21:3 (NASB)

That is, Yahweh’s plan to slaughter the people in the temple, in the city of Jerusalem, and throughout Israel had not changed. So, Yahweh had pulled His sword out of its protective sheath. This was more than a warning of the coming invasion by the Babylonian army. It implied certainty!

Then in the second prophecy in verses 8-17, Yahweh announced that His sword was sharpened and polished. The prophet sang a song about His sword. We made the point that the word “sword” occurs seventeen times in this chapter. It occurs more times in this chapter than in any other chapter in the Bible. That helps us understand that the theme of this chapter is the sword of the Lord. Again, that implied destruction was certain.

Then in verse 10 we discovered the people did not believe destruction was coming. The Hebrew word for rod in the verse is the same one that is translated as scepter in Genesis 49:10. So, they thought they did not need to be concerned about Ezekiel’s warnings. They thought the Messiah would rescue them from the Babylonian invasion. But in verse 13 Yahweh asked what if the scepter or the Messiah does not rescue you? The idea is maybe you are wrong.

In verses 14-17, God announced that His sword had been sharpened and polished. So, it would be three times as effective at killing. In verses 15-16, He said His sword would be glistening in the sun as the light rays glinted off the sword as it swung left and right slaughtering the people. Then Yahweh clapped His hands in approval. That is the summary of the second prophecy in the chapter.

So, Genesis 49:10 was important for our understanding of verses 1-17. The false prophets, false priests, and the wicked politicians had encouraged the people in Israel that

the Messiah would come and rescue them. They assumed they did not need to worry about the messages from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel, but they were wrong!

THE SWORD IS THE KING OF BABYLON (v 18-27). The third and fourth prophecies in this chapter are what our study is about. The third prophecy begins with verse 18 and ends with verse 27. It reveals that Yahweh’s sword is the King of Babylon. Here are verses 18-19,

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. Ezekiel 21:18-19 (NASB)

The third prophecy is introduced with “the word of the Lord.” This time Yahweh told Ezekiel to mark two ways or roads for the sword of the king of Babylon. Notice that Ezekiel was not told to draw with a writing instrument on something but to make something. That reminded me of when I was a very young boy. I loved making roads in a flower bed on the side of the house. I mixed water and dirt together to make mud. Then I poured the mud on the ground little by little to make roads and bridges. Then I put my little toy cars and trucks on the roads and pushed them along the roads. I had fun making those roads. So, Ezekiel was to make two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon,” that is, for the Babylonian army. The two ways went to two different lands or nations. The prophet was told to also make a signpost or signs for the two roads.

The next verse tells us what the prophet was to write on the sign.

“You shall mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem.” Ezekiel 21:20 (NASB)

One sign was to indicate the road that would take the army to Rabbah which was in the nation of Ammon. The other sign would be for the road to the fortified city of Jerusalem in Judah. The road divided at the city of Babylon.

Now we must understand that the two roads the prophet Ezekiel made were symbols. But what did they symbolize? The answer is revealed in the next several verses. Verse 21 says,

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. Ezekiel 21:21 (NASB)

This verse reveals that the mind of the Babylonian king. He was trying to decide if he should invade Judah and conquer Jerusalem or invade Ammon and conquer Rabbah. So, he consulted the occult. He used divination. The first divination technique was that he took some arrows. One Bible commentator said the king took two arrows and marked one with the name Rabbah and the other with Jerusalem. Then the arrow that was drawn from the quiver determined the path the army should take. Another Bible commentator suggested that maybe the king shot the arrows into the air or threw them up into the air, and depending upon where they landed that helped to make the decision. Those are helpful ideas, but the truth is we do not know how he used the arrows for divination.

Secondly, he used household idols. Some have proposed that the priest of the false religion that was represented by the idol spoke for the idols, or maybe Yahweh allowed a demon to speak for the idols. But again, we do not really know how he used the idols.

The third divination technique was the examination of a liver. This technique is called a hepatoscopy. This approach involved examining the liver of a sacrifice animal to obtain an answer.

Verse 22 tells us what happened.

“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.” Ezekiel 21:22 (NASB)

So, the divination indicated that he should go to his right.

The sign said, “Jerusalem.” So, he sent all the military weapons that were necessary to defeat Jerusalem: battering rams, ramps, and a siege wall. Then, off the army went to Jerusalem.

Before we go any further, notice three very important divine principles from these verses. The first principle is that Yahweh controlled the divination so that King Nebuchadnezzar made the decision Yahweh wanted Him to make. The message is Yahweh is sovereignly controlling the nations of the world to accomplish His righteous purposes. Proverbs 16:33 says,

**The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from the LORD.
Proverbs 16:33 (NASB)**

This should be a comfort to every believer. The second principle is that Yahweh knew exactly what the king was thinking and planning because it is recorded in Scripture. A third principle is that Yahweh uses wicked nations to judge other wicked nations.

Verses 23-24 tell us that somehow the Israelites heard later about the divination but still thought they were safe from the Babylonian army.

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. 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. Ezekiel 21:23-24 (NASB)

Here we are told the Israelites thought the divination had deceived King Nebuchadnezzar. Just as they did not believe the prophets, they did not believe the divination. They failed to realize that maybe Yahweh had guided the divination to accomplish His purpose. They were clinging to the belief that the Messiah would rescue them (v. 10, 13), and ignored their sins, the prophets, and the divination.

This gives us a fourth important principle. We should

never ignore evil events for God has allowed them for a reason. There is something to be learned from them. When something evil happens, we should ask God to give us understanding. That is the message of James 1:5. God may destroy a home, a church, or a nation to accomplish His purposes. He has promised to give understanding.

Verses 25-27 is the high point of the chapter and end of the third prophecy. Here is verse 25,

“And you, O slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end,” Ezekiel 21:25 (NASB)

Verse 25 is about Zedekiah. He was the last man to sit on David’s throne in Jerusalem in the Old Testament era. Notice that Yahweh did not call Zedekiah a king. He calls him, “O Slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel.” I should add quickly that the Hebrew word for “slain” can also be translated as “profaned.” That appears to be the better meaning since Zedekiah was taken to Babylon alive. His death is not mentioned in Scripture. Profane means that Zedekiah was not fit to be king. He was also a very wicked king (2 Kings 25:19-20; 2 Chronicles 36:12-13; Ezekiel 17:11-21). In addition, Zedekiah was called a prince because he was not qualified to be king (2 Kings 24:17). So, he was profane, wicked, and unqualified to be king. Therefore, 2 Kings 25:20 says it this way. The Lord was angry until he cast out Zedekiah, his mother, and daughter from His presence. That is, because of his wickedness he was unacceptable as the king of Israel. He was unacceptable as mediator between the people and Yahweh. This gives us a fifth principle. When we have unconfessed sin, our service is unacceptable to God.

Therefore in verse 26, we are told that Yahweh said, “Remove the turban and take off the crown.”

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. Ezekiel 21:26 (NASB)

Yahweh said, “Remove the turban and take off the crown.” When Yahweh said “take off the crown,” that referred to the

collapse to the civil government. Also, Yahweh said, “Remove the turban.” The Hebrew word for “turban” is *mitsnepet*. It is used exclusively for the turban worn by the high priest (Exodus 28:4, 37, 39; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Leviticus 8:9; 16:4). So, when Yahweh told Zedekiah to remove his turban, it symbolically referred to the collapse of the priesthood.

The priesthood collapsed because the civil government collapsed. In 588-586 B.C. the Babylonian army captured Zedekiah, tore down buildings, and burned the temple and Jerusalem with fire and slaughtered people across Israel. Then the Davidic dynasty and the priesthood collapsed. Most importantly, notice the phrase “this will no longer be the same.” It means both the priesthood and kingdom had come to an end. It also implies something will be different in the future.

So, in verse 27 we are told,

“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 21:27 (NASB)

The Hebrew for “ruin” sounds like the Hebrew word for “guilt” in Ezekiel 16:49. So, this is a play on words. We are to understand that ruin occurred because they were guilty. He could have just said, “Guilty, guilty, guilty.” Their ruin occurred because of their guilt. Galatians 6:7 reminds us,

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. Galatians 6:7 (NASB)

Then, Yahweh said, “This also will be no more.” The Davidic kingdom and the priesthood would be no more because of their guilt. What they knew and had experienced would be no more! What a loss! What a tragedy. Unrepentant sin eventually destroys, and that has been the message of Ezekiel. It is at this point in history when the times of the Gentiles started (Luke 21:24), and King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 begins.

Next, notice the phrase, “until he comes.” But who comes? The answer is made clearer in the phrase “whose right it is.” This refers us back to the prophecy in Genesis 49:10.

Remember the word Shiloh means ‘to whom it belongs’ or ‘to what is justly His.’ This reveals verse 27 is referring to the future Messiah. Everything would cease to exist as they knew it, until the Messiah-King comes and takes what is His right. That is, He establishes the Davidic kingdom. At that time the priesthood will also be restored, but not as they knew it.

We should remember that Genesis 3:15 was a prophecy about the Messiah-High Priest and Genesis 49:10 was about the Messiah-King. That is, the Messiah will be both a priest and a king. A very important prophecy about this is found in Zechariah 6:12-14. It tells us that the office of king and priest will come together in the Messiah. As a side note, we should understand that God does not agree with the concept of separation of church and state. The Messiah will merge them together in Himself. Zechariah 6:12-14 says,

“Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.” Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the LORD . . . Zechariah 6:12-14. (NASB)

The Branch refers to the Messiah (Isaiah 4:2; 11: 1; 53:2; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15). So Zechariah 6:13-14 reveals the Messiah will have two offices. He will be a priest and a king. Here is another side comment. Notice the Messiah will build the temple in the millennial kingdom.

Now turn back to Ezekiel 21:27. Yahweh added, “I will give it to Him.” Why will Yahweh give the priesthood and the kingdom to the Messiah? Because Matthew 25:34 says that God the Father has already prepared the kingdom from the foundation of the world. Then Philippians 2:8-10 tells us the Father will give it to Him some day. This will happen after the second coming of the Messiah (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25-26). So, verses 25-27 are a gold mine about the Messiah.

They teach us that when Christ sets up the kingdom in the millennium, He will have two offices. God the Father

will give Him both offices. He will be our great high priest and rule as king in the millennial kingdom. God the Father has been planning for this since the foundation of the world. That is why Jesus told us to pray, “Your kingdom come!”

THE SWORD IS AGAINST AMMON (v 28-32). Verses 28-32 are about the destruction of Ammon. I plan to revisit this prophecy when we study Ezekiel 25:1-7. So, I will not read it now. But I will just give a very quick summary. This passage tells us the Babylonian army invaded Ammon and completely destroyed it. Later, Ezekiel 25:3 will tell us they were destroyed because they rejoiced that Israel was destroyed by the Babylonians. History tells us that the Babylonians slaughtered Israel and then followed the other road over to Ammon and annihilated that nation. Ezekiel 25:1-7 will give us more information.

CONCLUSION. I want to end by explaining two important points in this chapter. First, God kept His promise of a future Messiah even while disciplining Israel for their rebellion, sin, and guilt. He is a faithful God! Even when all hope seemed to be gone when the last man sitting on the Davidic throne was taken away, Yahweh promised something better was coming.

Second, we must never ignore the clear message of God and listen to someone else. They ignored all of the warnings, and listened to the false prophets, false priests, and wicked leaders who gave them comfort that the Messiah would protect them. We could say they butchered Scripture. So, we must be like the Bereans and study the Scriptures to see what God has said. We must always believe what Yahweh said.