

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Ezekiel Chapter 21-22

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Ezekiel Chapter 21

Babylon as God's Sword of Judgment - Verses 1-23

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²"Son of man, set your face against Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuary. Prophecy against the land of Israel ³and say to her: 'This is what the LORD says: I am against you. I will draw my sword from its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked. ⁴Because I am going to cut off the righteous and the wicked, my sword will be unsheathed against everyone from south to north. ⁵Then all people will know that I the LORD have drawn my sword from its sheath; it will not return again.' ⁶"Therefore groan, son of man! Groan before them with broken heart and bitter grief. ⁷And when they ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that is coming. Every heart will melt with fear and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every leg will be wet with urine. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD.'" ⁸The word of the LORD came to me: ⁹"Son of man, prophecy and say, 'This is what the Lord says: "'A sword, a sword, sharpened and polished—¹⁰sharpened for the slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! "'Shall we rejoice in the scepter of my royal son? The sword despises every such stick. ¹¹"The sword is appointed to be polished, to be grasped with the hand; it is sharpened and polished, made ready for 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 thrown to the sword along with my people. Therefore beat your breast. ¹³"Testing will surely come. And what if even the scepter, which the sword despises, does not continue? declares the Sovereign LORD.' ¹⁴"So then, son of man, prophecy and strike your hands together. Let the sword strike twice, even three times. It is a sword for slaughter—a sword for great slaughter, closing in on them from every side. ¹⁵So that hearts may melt with fear and the fallen be many, I have stationed the sword for slaughter at all their gates. Look! It is forged to strike like lightning, it is grasped for slaughter. ¹⁶Slash to the right, you sword, then to the left, wherever your blade is turned. ¹⁷I too will strike my hands together, and my wrath will subside. I the LORD have spoken." ¹⁸The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁹"Son of man, mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to take, both starting from the same country. Make a signpost where the road branches off to the city. ²⁰Mark out one road for the sword to come against Rabbah of the Ammonites and another against Judah and fortified Jerusalem. ²¹For the king of Babylon will stop at the fork in the road, at the junction of the two roads, to seek an omen: He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, he will examine the liver. ²²Into his right hand will come the lot for Jerusalem, where he is to set up battering rams, to give the command to slaughter, to sound the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to build a ramp and to erect siege works. ²³It will seem like a false omen to those who have sworn allegiance to him, but he will remind them of their guilt and take them captive.

21:1-32 The short message in 20:45-48 introduces the first of three messages about the judgments that would come upon Jerusalem: (1) the sword of the Lord (21:1-7); (2) the sharpened sword (21:8-17); and (3) the sword of Nebuchadnezzar (21:18-22). The city would be destroyed because it was defiled. According to Jewish law, defiled objects were to be passed through fire in order to purify them (see

Numbers 31:22-23; Psalm 66:10-12; Proverbs 17:3). God's judgment is designed to purify; destruction is often a necessary part of that process.

21:18-23 Ammon evidently rebelled against Babylon about the same time as King Zedekiah of Judah. In 589 B.C. the nations of Judah and Ammon were among those who conspired against Babylon (Jeremiah 27:3). Ezekiel gave this message to the exiles who had heard the news and were again filled with hope of returning to their homeland. Ezekiel said that Babylon's king would march his armies into the region to stop the rebellion. Traveling from the north, he would stop at a fork in the road, one way leading to Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, and the other leading to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. He had to decide which city to destroy. Just as Ezekiel predicted, King Nebuchadnezzar went to Jerusalem and besieged it.

21:21 Nebuchadnezzar had several ways to get advice on the future. One was shaking the arrows, much like drawing straws, to see which course of action was right; a second was consulting an idol to see if some spirit might direct him; a third was having priests inspect the liver of a sacrificed animal to see if its shape and size would indicate a decision.

Babylon as God's Sword of Judgment - Verses 24-31

²⁴ "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because you people have brought to mind your guilt by your open rebellion, revealing your sins in all that you do—because you have done this, you will be taken captive. ²⁵ "'You profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax, ²⁶ this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. ²⁷ A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.' ²⁸ "And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says about the Ammonites and their insults: "'A sword, a sword, drawn for the slaughter, polished to consume and to flash like lightning! ²⁹ Despite false visions concerning you and lying divinations about you, it will be laid on the necks of the wicked who are to be slain, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax. ³⁰ "'Let the sword return to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your ancestry, I will judge you. ³¹ I will pour out my wrath on you and breathe out my fiery anger against you; I will deliver you into the hands of brutal men, men skilled in destruction. ³² You will be fuel for the fire, your blood will be shed in your land, you will be remembered no more; for I the LORD have spoken.'"

21:27 Instead of using exclamation points for emphasis, the Hebrew language uses repetition. The repetition of "a ruin" shows the certainty of the end of the old order—the world as it is now. The new order—the world as God intends it—will come when he "to whom it rightly belongs" (the Messiah) appears to set up his righteous kingdom.

21:28 The Ammonites and Israelites were usually fighting with each other. God told the Israelites not to ally with foreign nations, but Judah and Ammon united against Babylon in 589 B.C. (Jeremiah 27:3). God first judged Judah when Nebuchadnezzar first went to Jerusalem (21:22); but Ammon would also be judged, not for allying with Judah, but for watching Jerusalem's destruction with insulting delight.

Ezekiel Chapter 22

Judgment on Jerusalem's Sins - Verses 1-22

¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²"Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her detestable practices ³and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You city that brings on herself doom by shedding blood in her midst and defiles herself by making idols, ⁴you have become guilty because of the blood you have shed and have become defiled by the idols you have made. You have brought your days to a close, and the end of your years has come. Therefore I will make you an object of scorn to the nations and a laughingstock to all the countries. ⁵Those who are near and those who are far away will mock you, you infamous city, full of turmoil. ⁶"See how each of the princes of Israel who are in you uses his power to shed blood. ⁷In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the foreigner and mistreated the fatherless and the widow. ⁸You have despised my holy things and desecrated my Sabbaths. ⁹In you are slanderers who are bent on shedding blood; in you are those who eat at the mountain shrines and commit lewd acts. ¹⁰In you are those who dishonor their father's bed; in you are those who violate women during their period, when they are ceremonially unclean. ¹¹In you one man commits a detestable offense with his neighbor's wife another shamefully defiles his daughter-in-law, and another violates his sister, his own father's daughter. ¹²In you are people who accept bribes to shed blood; you take interest and make a profit from the poor. You extort unjust gain from your neighbors. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹³"I will surely strike my hands together at the unjust gain you have made and at the blood you have shed in your midst. ¹⁴Will your courage endure or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it. ¹⁵I will disperse you among the nations and scatter you through the countries; and I will put an end to your uncleanness. ¹⁶When you have been defiled in the eyes of the nations, you will know that I am the LORD.'" ¹⁷Then the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁸"Son of man, the people of Israel have become dross to me; all of them are the copper, tin, iron and lead left inside a furnace. They are but the dross of silver.¹⁹ Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into Jerusalem. ²⁰As silver, copper, iron, lead and tin are gathered into a furnace to be melted with a fiery blast, so will I gather you in my anger and my wrath and put you inside the city and melt you. ²¹I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her. ²²As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted inside her, and you will know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath on you."

22:1-31 Chapter 22 explains why Jerusalem's judgment would come (22:2-16), how it would come (22:17-22), and who would be affected by it (22:23-31).

22:6-13 The leaders, whom God had chosen, were especially responsible for the moral climate of the nation. The same is true today (see James 3:1). Unfortunately, many of the sins mentioned here have been committed in recent years by Christian leaders. We are living in a time of unprecedented attacks by Satan. We must uphold our leaders in prayer, and leaders must seek accountability in order to help them keep their moral and spiritual integrity.

22:17-22 Precious metals are refined with intense heat to remove the impurities. When heated, the dross or slag rises to the top of the molten metal and is skimmed off and thrown away. The purpose of the invasion of Jerusalem was to refine the people. But the refining process showed that the people, like worthless slag, had nothing good in them.

Judgment on Jerusalem's Sins – Verses 23-31

²³ Again the word of the LORD came to me: ²⁴ "Son of man, say to the land, 'You are a land that has not been cleansed or rained on in the day of wrath.' ²⁵ There is a conspiracy of her princes within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her. ²⁶ Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. ²⁷ Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. ²⁸ Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says'—when the LORD has not spoken. ²⁹ The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice. ³⁰ "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. ³¹ So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

22:26 The priests were supposed to keep God's worship pure and to teach the people right living. But the worship of God had become commonplace to them; they ignored the Sabbath, and they refused to teach the people. They no longer carried out their God-given duties (Leviticus 10:10-11; Ezekiel 44:23). When doing God's work becomes no more important than any mundane task, we are no longer giving God the reverence he deserves. Instead of bringing God down to our sinful human level, we should live in ways that reflect his holiness.

22:30 The wall represented a wall of spiritual protection surrounding God's people. But this wall was in serious disrepair because there was no one who could lead the people back to God. The feeble attempts to repair the gap—through religious rituals or messages based on opinion rather than God's will—were as worthless as whitewash, which only covered up the real problems. What the people really needed was total spiritual reconstruction! When we give the appearance of loving God without living his way, we are covering up sins that could eventually damage us beyond repair. Don't use religion as a whitewash; repair your life by applying the principles of God's Word. Then you can join with others to "stand in the gap" and make a difference for God in the world.