

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel
Message 40
June 12, 2016



Torah Reading IV by Alex Levin

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The Parable of the Sword
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Ezekiel 21:1-17

¹ And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ² Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the sanctuaries, and prophesy against the land of Israel; ³ and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. ⁴ Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of its sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: ⁵ and all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, have drawn forth my sword out of its sheath; it shall not return any more. ⁶ Sigh therefore, thou son of man; with the breaking of thy loins and with bitterness shalt thou sigh before their eyes. ⁷ And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt say, Because of the tidings, for it cometh; and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and it shall be done, saith the Lord Jehovah.

⁸ And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ⁹ Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith Jehovah: Say, A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished; ¹⁰ it is sharpened that it may make a slaughter; it is furbished that it may be as lightning: shall we then make mirth? the rod of my son, it contemneth every tree. ¹¹ And it is given to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword, it is sharpened, yea, it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. ¹² Cry and wail, son of man; for it is upon my people, it is upon all the princes of Israel: they are delivered over to the sword with my people; smite therefore upon thy thigh. ¹³ For there is a trial; and what if even the rod that contemneth shall be no more? saith the Lord Jehovah. ¹⁴ Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thy hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the deadly wounded: it is the sword of the great one that is deadly wounded, which entereth into their chambers. ¹⁵ I have set the threatening sword against all their gates, that their heart may melt, and their stumblings be multiplied: ah! it is made as lightning, it is pointed for slaughter. ¹⁶ Gather thee together, go to the right, set thyself in array, go to the left, whithersoever thy face is set. ¹⁷ I will also smite my hands together, and I will cause my wrath to rest: I, Jehovah, have spoken it (ASV, 1901).

THE SWORD OF GOD IS COMING

Ezekiel 21:1-5

¹ And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ²Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the sanctuaries, and prophesy against the land of Israel; ³and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, ⁴Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of its sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: ⁵and all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, have drawn forth my sword out of its sheath; it shall not return any more (ASV, 1901).

The Lord God again came to Ezekiel telling him to set his face toward Jerusalem and *drop thy word toward the sanctuaries, and prophesy against the land of Israel*. He was commanded to drop or utter His predictions toward the holy places in Jerusalem the capital city but overall also against the whole land of Israel. Jerusalem is south of Babylon in the sense that the invaders would avoid the desert and follow the fertile crescent to invade Israel from the north. Jerusalem is actually southwest of Babylon.



Source: <http://www.imninalu.net/maps.htm>

And specifically the nation Israel God says that He is against them. As a result of their gross sins he will bring judgment against them. He is their adversary since they turned against them. The central point in this message is that He as their antagonist will bring a sword out of its sheath *and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked*. In other words when the Babylonians come for the final time acting as God's sword unsheathed they will indiscriminately kill all that are in their path. This will include the righteous as

well as the unrighteous. Some think that this contradicts God's discussion in chapters 14, 18 and 33 that only the unrighteous would be cut off. In fact the translators of the Septuagint were so perplexed that they changed the word righteous to unrighteous so as to comply with the text in the other three chapters. The issue though is how God views what He is doing compared to what people view what He is doing. The sword is not just an army coming, but God's own judgment; and as the fire devoured both the green wood and the dry (Ezekiel 20:47), so He would cut off out of the land the righteous and the wicked. The judgment was, as already declared, to be plainly *His* judgment. As far as people could tell the judgment was indiscriminate. From God's perspective it was select. When an army successfully invades a country they conquer it all and it appears to the people that the godly die with the wicked. He is actually taking the godly to be with Him in Paradise and sending the wicked to Sheol. Similarly there is a concept in the Bible that stresses corporate responsibility for individual sins. It is developed in the story of Achan in Joshua 7:1-26. Achan sinned, but his whole family suffered for his sin. In Achan's case he was the guilty party (Joshua 7:21), but his family, who may have shared guilt by remaining silent about his sin were the recipients of the consequences of his sins, which was death by stoning and fire. This was the same point made in Exodus 20:5 and 34:6-7. Individually each person is responsible for his or her own guilt of sin. The consequences of our sin will affect others who may be innocent of the guilt of our specific sin. This is true even when the sin is forgiven. Even in forgiveness the consequences remain. Consider the example of David. He sinned greatly with Bathsheba including allowing her husband to be killed on the battlefield. Though he was forgiven of his sins of adultery and murder, he still suffered the consequences (II Samuel 12:11-20). So David's time on earth after the sin was very troublesome including a civil war and the death of his baby with Bathsheba but he is greatly praised by God and is with Him in Paradise.

God was giving Ezekiel the specific completeness of the coming judgment to the land. This was God's judgment on Jerusalem and all Israel.

EZEKIEL MUST EXPRESS BITTERNESS OVER THE EXTENT OF THE JUDGMENT

Ezekiel 21:6-7

⁶Sigh therefore, thou son of man; with the breaking of thy loins and with bitterness shalt thou sigh before their eyes. ⁷And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt say, Because of the tidings, for it cometh; and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and it shall be done, saith the Lord Jehovah.

God now commands Ezekiel to act out the deepest of feelings *with the breaking of thy loins and with bitterness*, which refers to the deepest of feelings emanating from our central core, similar to a woman in labor pains, or some other deeply violent pain or emotion affecting our inner being. By being doubled over in pain and accompanied with bitterness Ezekiel is to demonstrate his extensive grief over what will befall the Jews. By acting this out he will effectively convey God's message to the elders who were with him in Babylon. The certainty of the coming judgment was to be conveyed to those in Jerusalem and it would be so terrifying that the people would be extremely fearful and paralyzed. They would be rendered incapable of resisting the invading Babylonian army.

What God had said would be accomplished would be accomplished. His Word is faithful and true. The Jews would learn that God gave them special dispensation in this world and they denied it, assumed it was a special status and would never change regardless of whether they sinned against Him or not. Now they would learn in a very difficult consequence that His is true and faithful to His Word.

THE SWORD IS SHARPENED

Ezekiel 21:8-11

⁸And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, ⁹Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith Jehovah: Say, A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished; ¹⁰it is sharpened that it may make a slaughter; it is furbished that it may be as lightning: shall we then make mirth? the rod of my son, it contemneth every tree. ¹¹And it is given to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword, it is sharpened, yea, it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer (ASV, 1901).

God now emphasizes His intentions by affirming the preparations He is making. He says that the sword is sharpened and brightened as in polishing up (furbished). It will be as swift and shiny as lightening is in the sky. This sword would be ready to cut with sharp strokes to bring slaughter to the people of Israel. Widespread slaughter was the intent of the Lord Jehovah in correcting the sins of the people. He asks the rhetorical question, “*shall we then make mirth?*” Which means that now is not the time for joy, it is a time for sorrow over sin. The people of Israel may have been temporarily giddy over the fleshly pleasures of the sins they were committing against Him but that would soon be over. The same concept exists in nominal unsaved Christianity today as their churches have given themselves over to man pleasing lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God (II Timothy 3:4). The sword of judgment will quickly alter the merry times to become weeping and gnashing of teeth in their destruction. Unsaved mankind is oblivious of the sovereignty of God over His creation. Further, they do not expect any divine retribution for the so called “natural unfolding of world evolution” in social practices flowing from the myth of physical evolution. So the sins are considered worthy choices and any criticism to the contrary is to be opposed.

While the reference to “*the rod of my son.*” Is obscure and has limited text to fully explain it, Genesis 49:9-10 seem to be the best solution to an exposition of this text. There Jacob is prophesying over his sons regarding their future and while calling on his son Judah refers to the sceptre which quite literally is a rod. The sceptre is the symbol of the power to govern and control. It would be given to the Jews to control their own government until the Messiah arrived to assume that responsibility. So this verse would be affirming that the people of Israel were expressing confidence in Jacob’s promises to Judah that were secure no matter how much they sinned against the Lord. They would always have secure control over the government of Israel. However, God is telling Ezekiel that the sword is coming and that is because they have despised the laws of God and favored idolatrous objects of wood over Him. The sword has been prepared and will be given over to the slayer, Nebuchadnezzar to carry out God’s judgment on His people.

ALL WILL BE DELIVERED TO THE SWORD

Ezekiel 21:12-13

¹²Cry and wail, son of man; for it is upon my people, it is upon all the princes of Israel: they are delivered over to the sword with my people; smite therefore upon thy thigh. ¹³For there is a trial; and what if even the rod that contemneth shall be no more? saith the Lord Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

Ezekiel is told to demonstrate his realization of what is coming upon Israel for their sins. He is told to, “Cry and wail.” The judgment will affect the people and the leaders of Israel. The leaders (Princes) will be delivered over to the sword too. The leaders had rejected God’s laws and chastisement was all that was left for them. Ezekiel was commanded again to beat upon his thigh as an expression of grief and emphasis of what would happen. This was a death lamentation for Judah and was similar to what Amos lamented at the death of the virgin Israel. Israel had considering herself in the full bloom of her youth had been cut off before her time in violent death. This is Amos’ lament to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Amos 5:1-3

²Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel. ²The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is cast down upon her land; there is none to raise her up. ³For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth a hundred shall have ten left, to the house of Israel (ASV, 1901).

God concludes that there will be a trial and the scepter or the sovereign state must necessarily then come to an end. He says so what to this. In other words it must happen and even if Israel ended its time on the land for a while it must happen. The furnace that destroys some also refines. To the few righteous this visitation of God “is a trial.”

THE FORCE OF DESTRUCTION

Ezekiel 21:14-17

¹⁴Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thy hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the deadly wounded: it is the sword of the great one that is deadly wounded, which entereth into their chambers. ¹⁵I have set the threatening sword against all their gates, that their heart may melt, and their stumblings be multiplied: ah! it is made as lightning, it is pointed for slaughter. ¹⁶Gather thee together, go to the right, set thyself in array, go to the left, whithersoever thy face is set. ¹⁷I will also smite my hands together, and I will cause my wrath to rest: I, Jehovah, have spoken it (ASV, 1901).

The Lord has Ezekiel now clap his hands very hard together and show that the sword would flash so brilliantly that it would appear as if it were two or three swords. The sword would be effective and reach to the inner most chambers of all the people especially the

leaders who would attempt to hide. Such would be the case with Zedekiah and his family. He was the deadly wounded mentioned here. When he tried to escape the private chambers in which he hid there would be no security. When he fled the city he would be found at the city gates. There was no avenue of escape. Where ever he fled he would be found as would all of his entourage and family. The sword's glitter is a descriptor of the sure effectiveness of the judgment which was to follow. Jehovah turns to it and says that its work is to gather up its strength, go to the right, turn to the left, being effective wherever it turned, for it will not miss it's intended objects. This was Jehovah's wrath: *"I will smite my hands together, and I will cause my wrath to rest. I Jehovah have spoken."* God finishes this lamentation by in effect smiting His hands together in essence as a token which is concluding the judgment and saying it is finished and I will not need any more compensation for the extreme violation of My Laws.

NEXT MESSAGE: NO DAVIDIC KING UNTIL MESSIAH REIGNS

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