

Ezekiel 21 – Behold, I Am Against Thee

By Holly Effiom

VV1-5

What does God want Ezekiel to do?

To whom does He direct Ezekiel to speak?

Where are the “holy places” located?

Where is the “land of Israel” in orientation to the “holy places”?

Is God’s message that He is for Israel? How do you know?

Does God say He will only cut off the wicked?

Will it only be those from among the children of Israel that will be affected?

LESSON: At the end of the previous chapter, the elders among the children of Israel were trying to be clever, claiming ignorance in the face of Ezekiel’s words – “He does speak in parables, don’t you think? Who can understand him?” Here in these first verses of chapter 21, we see that God isn’t having it; His purposes were not going to be thwarted by the claim of ignorance. He had every intention of *acting* against His people, and in fact, He expands it to “all flesh” – the whole world. He had not drawn His sword to *intimidate* people into compliance, He was going to *war* with these people of Ezekiel’s time, and it will be “all flesh” at the end time.

I believe the message of Ezekiel 20:47 – where I wondered if there would be a change in the complexion of a community – is that the wicked as well as the righteous among people of every complexion will be touched by God’s wrath.

VV6-7

What is God telling Ezekiel to do?

What is the “...breaking of the loins...”?

Is Ezekiel directed to express his discomfort and fear in private and in silence?

What will be his response when people ask him about his expressions of discomfort?

LESSON: Ezekiel feels pain within himself over the message from God, over the judgment that is to come. I can’t help but imagine that it might feel like *labor pangs*. Will Jerusalem’s suffering be in vain, according to Rev 12:1-5? No, God has shown us that it is not in vain – Jesus was born, and Daniel’s 69th week was completed.

Will the final Gentile world power’s suffering be in vain, according to Rev 19:11-16? No. After the 3.5 years (42 months, 1260 days), the kingdom of God in the earth will be reborn, and Jesus will contend for and take His throne of dominion in the earth, beginning the day of the Lord, and the 70th week will be completed. [NOTE: Rev 5 is Jesus’s investiture in the throne of God in heaven as well as the throne of the earth. It is the ceremony being described in Daniel 7:13-14.]

VV8-13

What is God telling Ezekiel to do?

What does it mean that the sword has been “...sharpened and furbished...”?

Is there significance in the number of times these terms are mentioned in this section of scripture?

What do we learn about the sword that has been furbished?

Does the sword have an opinion about leadership in general?

What does it feel toward the son of God in particular?

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To whom will the sword be given?
Upon whom is the sword to be used?
Is God rejoicing over this fact? How do you know?
Why does God tell Ezekiel to smite his thigh? What does this do?
What does God call what is about to happen to the princes of Israel?
Will any of the princes of Israel survive, if the sword has its way?

LESSON: In this section of scripture, God, in His words, “personifies” the sword, an inanimate object that has been prepared for a lethal purpose. In its objectivity, it despises the exalted position of God’s child – it has no respect for the “princes of Israel”, nor did it concern itself with the pain that destruction would cause his Father. And, it does indeed grieve God to see what is coming. This is why He tells Ezekiel to “cry and howl” – He is not rejoicing at the hurt of His children.

The term “furbished” is repeated 3 times in this section of scripture. Why? “Furbished”, interpreted as polished in my Bible commentary, but this morning, it seems to mean prepared for a purpose. What else is being prepared for a purpose? And, for what purpose? When I asked, this is what I was told.

The atonement sacrifice, instituted upon the deaths of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, in which two kids were brought to sacrifice – one goat was prepared for sacrifice, while the other had all the iniquity transferred onto his head and was permitted to escape into the wilderness (the scapegoat). Lev 16; 17:10-16. Ezekiel is describing the instruments of a sacrifice and who is the “Priest” performing the sacrifice? God Himself (Gen 22:8)

The sword, we learn in these verses, was prepared for the purpose of destroying Jerusalem. If the sword was prepared to destroy perfectly, what of the “princes of Israel”? They had “prepared” themselves to be the recipients of the destruction... *they were the sacrifice?*

Daniel 9:24 says that 70 weeks were determined upon “...Thy people and upon thy holy city, to

1. Finish the transgression, and to
2. Make and end of sins, and to
3. Make reconciliation for iniquity, and to
4. Bring in everlasting righteousness, and to
5. Seal up the vision and prophecy, and to
6. Anoint the most Holy.”

According to the Law of Moses, the first 3 goals are accomplished through sacrifice. Furthermore, the form of the atonement sacrifice requires one goat be slaughtered because “...almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” Heb 9:22. God makes it clear in Eze 18:20, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” The soul that sins is *chosen* for the sacrifice.

What might this section of Ezekiel be telling us then? I believe, everything we have read to this point is describing the fulfillment of the Law of Atonement by God *Himself*, and all the instruments of the ritual are being put into place (prepared) – the sword, the sacrifice, and even the slaughter.

VV14-17

What does God tell Ezekiel to do?
Is Ezekiel directed to “smite” his thigh again?

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What will be doubled in this action? How does this become “...the third time...”?
Who is the sword of the slain directed towards? Is it directed toward the poor man?
Where will the “great men” be found? Will the “great men” be able to escape his portion?
Who else will smite His hands at this time?
What will happen to God’s fury at this time?

LESSON: When I read V12, seeing that Ezekiel was crying and howling for the pain of what was to come upon the princes of Israel, and God telling him to smite his thigh, I wondered why. And I recalled the way I would pinch my arm real hard when in pain at the dentist or something. Why did I do this? It *diverted* my mind from the principal source pain. Is this what Ezekiel was doing by smiting of his thigh?

But then, V14 exhorts Ezekiel to smite his hands together, signifying that the sword be doubled the third time, and I thought, is this like the time-times-and-half-time mentioned in Daniel and Revelation? Is this a reminder of the tribulation and the end of Gentile world rule? If so, where’s the half-time? And then I read V17, in which God Himself smites His hands together, after which His fury will rest.

I asked what it meant, and I was reminded of Dan 9 24-27, where I was so focused on the 70 weeks of years that I missed understanding the 3 markers to the end of Adam’s day.

This section of scripture is hard to understand, but what is clear is that the sword is judging the three offences and the *process* required to bring God’s fury to rest – the avenging of the offense and restoration of righteousness – is where we want to be (goal# 4 on the Daniel 9:24 list).

VV18-24

What does God tell Ezekiel to do? For what purpose?
What two routes are predicted for the king of Babylon’s attack?
Will the attack come from two different lands?
Will Jerusalem’s neighbor be unscathed?
Which of Jerusalem’s neighbors will also suffer?
How does the king of Babylon decide on which path to attack?
What was the path to his right?
What does the king of Babylon do to the city to the right? Does he simply conquer it? How do you know?
Will the princes of Jerusalem be surprised? How do you know?
What is the significance of the phrase he will “...call to remembrance”? Eze 16:35-42; Rev 16:19
What does it mean exactly to have one’s transgressions “discovered”? V24
Whose memory will be pricked?
Whose actions will cause their transgressions to be “discovered”?
How will this discovery be different from how transgressions were discovered before?
What will happen to Jerusalem because their sin is no longer hidden?
What does it mean to be “taken with the hand”, considering the meaning of Dan 8:25?
How is this section of scripture – “taken with the hand” – related to Eze 5:15-17?

LESSON: The attack on Jerusalem will be from 2 directions, but have one source – God Almighty, Who has declared himself to be *against* that Jerusalem. Babylon, with all its foolish divinations, was merely the instrument.

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The phrase “...call to remembrance...” evokes the Law of Jealousy outlined in Num 5:12-31, which describes what is to be done when a man becomes suspicious of the fidelity of his wife. Eze 16:42 makes clear that God’s jealousy toward Jerusalem will be assuaged when Jerusalem, his wife, has been judged. Jerusalem (“...them that have sworn oaths...”) will be surprised by the viciousness of the attack from Babylon, as explained in V23, “...it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight...”

Verse 24 takes us back to Eze 17:15-19, in which God describes how Jerusalem despised the covenant she had made with Babylon, and broke her vow; and because of this *pattern* of behavior, God would let her be “...taken with the hand...”, which was foretold in Eze 5:15-17. This section of scripture is referring to Jerusalem itself. Eze 7:13-15 describes the sword as being outside (without) in that final Gentile world power, and Dan 8:25 “...broken without hand...” informs us that One with power greater than a mere man’s hands will *break* this nation.

VV25-27

To whom now is God directing His words?

What does profane mean?

Who’s “...day has come”? What does this mean?

Which “time” is being discussed – the time of Ezekiel or the end time Gentile rule? How do you know? Dan 9:24.

What is God directing Ezekiel to remove?

How is a “diadem” different from a “crown”? Jer 13:17-27.

Is this section of scripture saying that there will not be any leadership during this time? Ps 75:7 how do you know?

What message is God giving here? What is He overturning?

Why does God repeat it 3 times?

To Whom is God referring when He says “Whose right it is”? How do you know?

How does this other leader have a right to the diadem, according to the Law of Moses?

LESSON: It is important to contextualize to whom God is speaking directly – is it an individual or a nation? Is it Jerusalem or that final Gentile power? What does this section of scripture tell us about this prince?

1. He is a “profane wicked prince of Israel”. This is not the same person as the prince of Jerusalem mentioned in Eze 12:10, though the demise of this prince will be similar to that of Zedekiah, who was *king*, described in Eze 16:59; 17:19. He is speaking to that final Gentile world power, a “prince”, calling it *profane* – or *irreverent*, treating what is holy as *unholy* – in his treatment of the honor, position, and power that was bestowed upon him by God Almighty. God calls this prince *wicked* – the final step on man’s march toward destruction (Eze 7:10-11) – in which he intentionally and knowingly *seeks* to harm his fellow man. This principality will produce a king that will be a “vile person” (Dan 11:21) and “beast from out of the earth” (Rev 13:11).
2. “Whose day has come”. This phrase speaks to the end of Adam’s day, his time of dominion in the earth (finite), upon the commencement of the Lord’s Day (infinite). This assures us that the earth will not be left without a Shepherd – the very thought of which prompted John to weep in Rev 5:4.

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3. “When iniquity shall have an end”. This informs us of *when* Adam’s day will end – when Dan 9:24 is fulfilled.

God directs Ezekiel to remove the diadem and crown from the head of this wicked prince. There will be leadership after this point, but it will not be the same, for the small group of people who choose will be corrupt (Dan 11:23). They will prefer and *choose* leaders in the vein of the “vile person” who will not only be incompetent as a leader (with no interest in serving anyone but himself – Dan 11:37), but will tell outright lies.

We did an analysis of the use of the terms “crowns” and “horns” when studying Revelation, and we proposed that both terms were the same when it came to meaning power; however, they differ in the means to that “power”. Horns were generated from the ideations of the beast itself, but crowns are bestowed upon one by a power greater than itself. Horns carry the connotation of power wrested from the earth, while crowns are the divine will of God.

What then is a diadem? And how is it related to “...whose right it is...”? Ezekiel separates the “diadem” from the “crown”, both of which were on the head of the wicked prince. If the crown means power, then the question is power over what? When God gives a crown, He also provides the realm, or domain, over which the power is wielded, by the divine will of God. The crown and the diadem together then connote dominion, which *is* the divine will of God for Adam.

But, in this section of scripture, God is directing Ezekiel to remove the diadem and crown, remove dominion from the wicked prince and let the people choose who they want to rule – exalting “... him that is low...” and abasing “... him that is high...”

The word overturn is mentioned 3 times in succession. Is this referring back to the 3 offenses adjudicated by the sword? We do know, at the end of all of this overturning, he “...whose right it is...” (Eze 21:27) will hold dominion in the earth.

VV28-32

- What people is God directing His message toward?
- Where were the children Ammon mentioned before? Eze 21:19-20
- What does the sword that has been polished have to do with them?
- What does it mean that they “...see vanity...”?
- What does it mean that they “...divine a lie...”? What is that lie?
- What is God promising for their future?
- Who are the Ammonites? Gen 19:30-38

LESSON: Recall Eze 9, when God was speaking to the men that came from the “higher gate” to the north of the sanctuary, each carrying “slaughter weapons”? He gave instruction to one of these men, the one wearing linen and carrying an “inkhorn” (writing instrument). God was ordering the destruction of Jerusalem, but He first wanted the man with the inkhorn to go throughout the city and set a mark in the foreheads of those who “...sigh and that cry for all the abominations...” The final instruction He speaks in verse 6 is so chilling to me, “...begin at my sanctuary”!

This scene came to mind when studying Eze 21. Ezekiel was being given a vision of what would be king Zedekiah’s and Jerusalem’s end.

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The mention of the Ammonites took me by surprise, after the analysis about the One “whose right it.” Returning to Eze 21:19-20, I remembered that God had mentioned two ways – He began with what would happen with Jerusalem, and was now describing Jerusalem’s near neighbor’s, Ammon’s, end. Remember, Ammon is a near cousin to Israel, being the descendants of Lot.

Interestingly, in the news a few weeks ago, the king of Jordan had placed several relatives and military generals under house arrest, purportedly, for plotting a coup. Ammān is the capital of Jordan.

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