

Ezekiel 21 – The Sword of the Lord, Fallen Crowns, and the King Whose Right It Is

1. The Sword Drawn Against Jerusalem (Ezekiel 21:1-7)

“And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, preach against the holy places, 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 both righteous and wicked from you.’” (Ezekiel 21:1-3, NKJV)

God tells Ezekiel to face Jerusalem and proclaim a hard message:

“I am against you... My sword is drawn.”

The “sword” pictures God’s judgment, soon to fall through Babylon’s armies. He says it will reach “from the south to the north” (Ezekiel 21:4), touching the whole land. The judgment is so severe that both the righteous and the wicked will suffer in the national catastrophe. The righteous are not punished for the sins of the wicked, but they are not spared from the shared consequences of their nation’s rebellion.

God then commands Ezekiel to act out the grief that is coming:

“Sigh therefore, son of man, with a breaking heart, and sigh with bitterness before their eyes.” (Ezekiel 21:6, NKJV)

Ezekiel is to bend over, clutching himself in visible anguish, groaning deeply. When the people ask, “Why are you sighing?” he is to answer:

“Because of the news, which comes. Every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming and shall be brought to pass,” says the Lord God. (Ezekiel 21:7, NKJV)

Even before the news of Jerusalem’s fall arrives, God lets them taste the grief through Ezekiel’s actions.

2. The Sharpened, Polished Sword (Ezekiel 21:8-17)

God continues with a vivid “song” about the sword:

*“A sword, a sword is sharpened
And also polished!
Sharpened to make a dreadful slaughter,
Polished to flash like lightning!” (Ezekiel 21:9-10, NKJV)*

This is not a random disaster. God’s judgment is purposeful, sharpened, and ready. It is not a time for laughter or false optimism. Ezekiel is told to **cry and wail**:

*“Cry and wail, son of man; for it will be against My people,
Against all the princes of Israel.” (Ezekiel 21:12, NKJV)*

Ezekiel's ministry is dramatically visual: sighing, crying, clapping his hands (Ezekiel 21:14). God is using every means—word and symbol—to reach a people who have hardened themselves to His voice.

3. The Fork in the Road and Pagan Divination (Ezekiel 21:18-23)

God then gives a striking picture:

“Appoint a road for the sword to go to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah, into fortified Jerusalem. For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver.” (Ezekiel 21:20-21, NKJV)

Nebuchadnezzar comes to a literal crossroads. One road leads to Rabbah (capital of the Ammonites), the other to Jerusalem. To decide, he uses pagan divination:

- **Shaking arrows** (like drawing lots, with city names marked on the arrows).
- **Consulting idols.**
- **Examining the liver** of a sacrificed animal.

From his side, he is using superstition. From God's side, He is sovereignly directing the outcome. The “right hand” decision is for Jerusalem (Ezekiel 21:22). God uses even the choices of pagan kings to accomplish His purposes.

To the people in Jerusalem, this seems like a false omen—they had made oaths and alliances and felt secure. But God says their sin has been brought to remembrance:

“Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered... you shall be taken in hand.” (Ezekiel 21:24, NKJV)

Their own actions have opened the door to the judgment now coming.

4. The Profane Prince and the Coming True King (Ezekiel 21:25-27)

God then addresses the last king of Judah, Zedekiah:

“Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord God: ‘Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the lowly, and abase the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.’” (Ezekiel 21:25-27, NKJV)

Zedekiah's day is over. The royal line will not continue in the old way. The turban (priestly headpiece) and crown (royal symbol) will be removed. God will overturn the existing order.

That last line looks beyond Zedekiah to a greater hope:

“...until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.” (Ezekiel 21:27, NKJV)

Human kings have failed. But God promises One who truly has the right to rule—a rightful King who will receive the crown from God Himself.

In the light of the New Testament, we recognize this as ultimately fulfilled in **Jesus Christ**:

- He is the Son of David, the rightful heir to the throne.
- He came in humility, not with a sword, but to give His life.
- He shed His blood on the cross to save us from our sins.
- He rose from the dead, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

Where human rulers corrupted power, Jesus uses His authority to save, heal, and restore. Where earthly crowns fall, His kingdom endures forever.

5. Judgment on the Ammonites (Ezekiel 21:28-32)

Finally, God turns to the Ammonites, Israel’s neighbors who had mocked and opposed them:

“Thus says the Lord God concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach... ‘A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for slaughter... I will judge you in the place where you were created, in the land of your nativity.’” (Ezekiel 21:28, 30, NKJV)

They will not escape. The same Babylonian sword that strikes Judah will also strike Ammon. God’s justice is not partial; He deals with all nations.

“I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow against you with the fire of My wrath, and deliver you into the hands of brutal men, who are skillful to destroy... you shall be no more remembered, for I the Lord have spoken.” (Ezekiel 21:31-32, NKJV)

The message is sobering: God’s patience has limits. When nations persist in pride, cruelty, and idolatry, they eventually face His judgment.

Practical Application

1. God’s warnings are acts of mercy.

Ezekiel’s sighing, crying, and symbolic actions are not theatrics—they are mercy. God is giving His people chance after chance to listen, wake up, and turn back before the sword falls.

2. Religious appearance cannot cover persistent rebellion.

The elders came and sat before Ezekiel as if they truly wanted the word of the Lord. But their hearts clung to idols. God does not just examine where we sit, but what we love.

3. Human power is temporary; Christ’s authority is eternal.

Zedekiah’s crown is removed. The political and religious structures of Jerusalem collapse. But God points to Someone “whose right it is.” Jesus is not just one more ruler—He is the King who cannot be dethroned.

4. God can use even ungodly systems to accomplish His purposes.

Nebuchadnezzar's pagan divination does not honor God—but God still directs the outcome. Nothing in human history, even in its confusion and superstition, is outside His ultimate sovereignty.

A Challenge for Believers

- Are you taking God's warnings seriously, or treating them as "parables" that do not really apply to you?
- Is there anything in your life that you are clinging to—an idol of the heart—while still wanting God's blessing and guidance?
- Are you trusting in human systems, leaders, or your own strength more than in the King "whose right it is"?

Ezekiel 21 calls us to examine our hearts honestly. God wants His people to respond to His word now, not after the "sword" of consequences falls.

You might pray:

"Lord, search my heart. Show me where I have ignored Your warnings or trusted in my own strength. I do not want to just 'sit before You' outwardly while holding onto idols inwardly. I submit myself again to Jesus, the true King. Teach me to live under His rule with humility and obedience."

An Invitation to Non-Believers

The judgment scenes in Ezekiel 21 are not here to crush hope, but to show how serious sin really is—and how desperately we need a righteous King and a perfect Savior.

Every human king in this chapter fails.

Every human attempt at security collapses.

But God points to One who has the right to reign.

That One is Jesus Christ.

- He entered our world, not with a drawn sword, but with outstretched hands.
- He shed His blood on the cross to take the punishment our sins deserve.
- He was buried, and on the third day He rose again.
- His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

The same God who spoke of the sword of judgment also offers you forgiveness, life, and peace through His Son.

You can respond to Him today. Not by trying to clean yourself up first, but by turning to Him in repentance and faith.

You might say:

“Lord Jesus, I see that my sin is serious and that I cannot save myself. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and that You rose again. I confess that You are God, Savior, and Lord. I turn from my sin and ask You to forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new. I want to live under Your rule as my King.”

If you sincerely call on Him, He will hear you.

The King “whose right it is” will not turn you away.

And instead of facing God’s sword as judgment, you will know His Son as your Savior.