

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious Part XXVI: God's Sovereignly Directing The Sword Toward Jerusalem (Ezekiel 21:18-27)

I. Introduction

- A. God is a sovereign Lord, so what He determines to occur **will** occur regardless how unlikely that event might seem to be in man's estimation.
- B. God's sovereignty was on display in Ezekiel 21:18-27 when He directed Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar to attack Jerusalem instead of Rabbah of Ammon, so we view this passage for our insight and application:

II. God's Sovereignly Directing The Sword Toward Jerusalem, Ezekiel 21:18-27.

- A. Continuing in the theme of the sword begun in Ezekiel 21:1, God directed Ezekiel in Ezekiel 21:18-19a to predict there would be two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to go. In reality, there were three cities of three different nations he could have attacked -- Tyre along the Mediterranean coast, Jerusalem in Judah south of him and Rabbah, the capital of Ammon to the east of the Jordan River, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1268. Tyre was militarily the most difficult of these cities to conquer (Ezekiel 26; 29:17-20), so Babylon's king decided to attack either Jerusalem or Rabbah, with the king taking counsel with his generals at the fork in the road between going toward Jerusalem or toward Rabbah, Ibid., Ezekiel 21:19b-21a.
- B. There would be apparent uncertainty among the generals and king as to which was the better city to attack, so they would resort to pagan divination to inquire of the gods, using (1) the shaking of arrows, (2) the teraphim gods and (3) the reading of a liver, Ezekiel 21:21b; Ibid. The use of arrows involved putting a name on each arrow, shaking it in a quiver, and then pulling out the first arrow, with the name on that arrow indicating the god's choice. We do not know how the teraphim were used, but it may have involved contacting demonic spirits associated the idols. As to the liver, the chosen animal was slain and dissected, with the animal's liver being "read" by diviners for the correct decision, Ibid.
- C. These pagan practices were of themselves futile, but God would **sovereignly** move in Nebuchadnezzar's use of them to make all of the types of divination point to Jerusalem, Ezekiel 21:22.
- D. When Nebuchadnezzar followed this divination and set his siege against Jerusalem, the people of the city would think he had errantly used false Babylonian divination, that his choice to attack Jerusalem would not succeed (Ezekiel 21:23a), but the Lord would recall Jerusalem's guilt as the basis of His directing the king's divination to direct him to Jerusalem that He might administer God's punishment on Judah, Ezekiel 21:23b-24.
- E. Accordingly, Judah's king Zedekiah would be punished for disobeying God (Ezekiel 21:25), his crown and turban being removed and the king himself being humbled (when he was blinded), Ez. 21:26a; Jer. 52:10-11.
- F. God indeed called for the exaltation of that which was low and the bringing down of that which was exalted, Ezekiel 21:26b. Zedekiah who had been exalted would be utterly ruined in God's discipline, Ezekiel 21:27a.
- G. As for who would be exalted, the ruin of the kingdom of Judah under Zedekiah would remain until He Who came to Whom judgment belonged arrived, and the Lord would give the honor and dominion to Him, Ezekiel 21:27b. This statement in view of the wide Biblical context is a Messianic prophecy (as follows):
 - 1. Zedekiah was not the right man to be king, for he was not in David's line for the throne, 2 Kings 24:17.
 - 2. Also, back in Genesis 49:10, Jacob's prophecy foretold how the scepter would not depart from the tribe of Judah until the lawgiver "Shiloh" had come. "Shiloh" translates the Hebrew word *shiloh*, which means "whose it is," what we would paraphrase as "to whom it **rightfully** belongs," Ibid., p. 98; emphasis ours.
 - 3. Since Ezekiel 21:27b presents a similar idea, the One to whom the throne of Judah rightfully belonged in place of Zedekiah would be the Messiah and son of David, and Christ offered to fulfill this prophecy when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey offering Himself as the true Messianic King, Matt. 21:1-11; Zech. 9:9.
 - 4. Israel rejected Messiah Jesus, so the Kingdom is postponed until His Second Coming, Rev. 19:11-20:6.

Lesson: *Contrary to the view of king Zedekiah and the people of Judah, Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar's use of pagan divination to decide to attack Jerusalem first instead of Ammon was not a futile exercise, for God sovereignly ruled that the pagan king's divination direct him to attack Jerusalem first to punish her for her sin. Similarly, God will sovereignly set up the Messiah to whom the throne of Israel truly belongs to be her next king.*

Application: *What God predicts will occur will indeed occur regardless how unlikely it may seem from man's perspective, so we MUST trust and heed His Word above all other assertions to the contrary.*