

Ezekiel 21 - God's Future Sword Upon Judah & Jerusalem; The Antichrist; Judgment on Ammon

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

(2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)

(C) Historical causes and reality of coming judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 20:1—24:27)

(b) Reality of coming judgment (Ezek 20:45—24:27)

(ii) Four messages of the sword (21:1-32)

(a) Sword is drawn against sanctuary and Israel (21:1-7)

(b) Sword is sharpened against rebellious Israel (21:8-17)

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(d) Sword is directed toward Ammon (21:28-32)

Ezekiel 21

(ii) Four messages of the sword (21:1-32)

(a) Sword is drawn against sanctuary and Israel (21:1-7)

1 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

1 And the word of the LORD came to me saying,

1 This message came to me from the LORD:

1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

- Ezekiel once again introduces a new revelation from God

2 "Son of man, **set your face against Jerusalem**, and speak prophetically against the **sanctuaries** and prophesy against the land of Israel;

2 "Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and speak against the sanctuaries and prophesy against the land of Israel;

2 "Son of Man, look toward Jerusalem, preach against its sanctuaries, and prophesy against Israel's land.

2 Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel,

- "...set your face against Jerusalem" - the focus now shifts from the "south" (the Negev, 20:45-48) to Jerusalem, and specifically against the "sanctuaries" and the "land of Israel"

- "...sanctuaries" - the plural form suggests the target is either the various structures within the temple compound, or the idolatrous shrines in Jerusalem. Given that the temple itself had become associated with idolatry, either or both may be in view.

3 and say to the land of Israel, 'This is what the LORD says: "Behold, I am against you; and **I will draw My sword** from its sheath and cut off from you **the righteous and the wicked**."

3 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 from you the righteous and the wicked."

3 Declare to Israel, 'This is what the LORD says: "Watch out! I'm against you! I'm going to unsheathe my sword to kill both the righteous and the wicked among you."

3 And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked.

- "...I will draw My sword" - God would personally wield His sword to "cut off" both "the righteous and the wicked"

— This verse pictures Yahweh personally removing His sword from its sheath and preparing for judgment. The "sword" drawn against Israel is that of his agent, Nebuchadnezzar (Cf. v19; 12:13; 17:20).

- "...the righteous and the wicked" - it is significant here that God will strike both the righteous and the wicked. When taken with what is said in 9:4, where an angel marked the foreheads of the righteous, it shows that this judgment could not be referring to Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC.

— This implies (along with what is said in v4) that the judgment referred to is prophetic, and will occur during the future Tribulation period

4 Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore My sword will go out from its sheath **against humanity** from south to north.

4 Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore My sword will go forth from its sheath against all flesh from south to north.

4 Since I'm going to kill both the righteous and the wicked among you, I'll be unsheathing my sword against everyone from south to north.

4 Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north:

- "...against humanity" - against "all flesh" implies a universal scope of judgment, once again placing the entire prophecy as future, during the Tribulation period

5 So humanity will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword from its sheath. It will not return to its sheath again."

5 Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath. It will not return *to its sheath* again."

5 Then everyone will know that I am the LORD, who unsheathed my sword, and who won't have to unsheathe it again."

5 That all flesh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more.

- Describes the outcome of this Tribulation judgment: that everyone, humanity, will recognize God as the source of this judgment. This knowledge by the "earth dwellers" will be evident from the outset of the Tribulation (Cf. Rev 6:15-17).

A comparison of 21:2-5 with 20:46-48 shows that the former is an interpretation of the latter passage.

Table 11: Comparison of Ezekiel 20:46-48 and 21:2-5

Chapter 20	Chapter 21
<p>⁴⁶Son of man,</p> <p>Set your face in the direction of the south,</p> <p>And let words flow southward,</p> <p>And prophesy against the forest field of the south.</p>	<p>²Son of man,</p> <p>Set your face toward Jerusalem,</p> <p>And let your words flow toward the sanctuaries,</p> <p>And prophesy against the soil of Israel.</p>
<p>⁴⁷And say to the forest-field,</p> <p>Hear the word of YHWH,</p> <p>Thus says the Lord YHWH,</p> <p>Behold, I kindle within you a fire,</p> <p>That will consume within you every fresh tree and every dry tree,</p> <p>An inextinguishable, intense flame,</p> <p>And every face from the south to the north will be burnt by it.</p>	<p>³⁻⁴And say to the soil of Israel,</p> <p>Thus says YHWH,</p> <p>Behold, I am against you, I shall draw my sword from its scabbard,</p> <p>And cut off from among you the righteous and the wicked,</p> <p>Because I have cut off from among you the righteous and the wicked,</p> <p>Therefore my sword shall leave its scabbard,</p> <p>And go against all flesh from the south to the north.</p>
<p>⁴⁸Thus all flesh shall see,</p> <p>That I, YHWH, have kindled it;</p> <p>It shall not be extinguished.</p>	<p>⁵Thus all flesh shall know,</p> <p>That I, YHWH, have drawn my sword out of its sheath;</p> <p>It shall nevermore return.</p>

6 As for you, son of man, **groan** with a breaking **heart** and **bitter grief**; you shall **groan** in their sight.

6 As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight.

6 "And now, Son of Man, you are to start groaning until you're sick to your stomach. You are to groan bitterly right in front of them.

6 Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes.

- "...groan" [2x] - the Lord was instructing Ezekiel to express his breaking heart and emotion in order to convey, through him, the intensity that God felt

- "...heart" - *moten*, "loins"; denotes the seat of a person's strength (Cf. Ps 69:23; Ezek 29:7; Nahum 2:10)

- Ezekiel was to "groan" or "sigh" before his contemporaries to display weakness that came from a broken heart

- "...bitter grief" - Ezekiel's groans or sighs were to be so profound as to induce complete physical and emotional collapse

7 And when they say to you, 'Why are you groaning?' you shall say, 'Because of the news, for it is coming; and every heart will melt, all hands will go limp, every spirit will be disheartened, and all knees will drip with water. **Behold, it is coming and it will happen,**' declares the Lord GOD."

7 And when they say to you, 'Why do you groan?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that is coming; and every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will happen,' declares the Lord GOD."

7 When they'll ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' you are to say, 'Because of the news that just arrived. Every heart will melt with fear, every hand will grow limp, every spirit will grow faint, and every knee will glisten with sweat.' Look! It has come and it will be fulfilled," declares the Lord GOD.

7 And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because 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 shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD.

- When his audience (the exiles) asked why he was groaning, Ezekiel would essentially tell them, I am in distress because of the impending news.

- "...Behold, it is coming and it will happen" - to emphasize the surety that this judgment will come, God closed the passage/prophecy with this promise

(b) Sword is sharpened against rebellious Israel (21:8-17)

- 8 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
- 8 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
- 8 This message came to me from the LORD:
- 8 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
 - The beginning of a new revelation from God to Ezekiel...
 - Whereas v1-7 was the drawing of God's sword from its sheath, v8-13 picture that sword being sharpened and polished

The following passage (v9-13) is a Hebrew poem that is often referred to as "the Song of the Sword":

- 9 "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'This is what the LORD says:' Say, 'A sword, a sword sharpened And also polished!
- 9 "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the LORD.' Say, 'A sword, a sword sharpened And also polished!
- 9 "Son of Man, prophesy and say, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: 'A sword! A sword is being sharpened. It's also being polished.
- 9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished:
 - The weapon of judgment is being prepared to strike

10 'Sharpened to make a slaughter, Polished to flash like lightning!' **Or shall we rejoice, the rod of My son despising every tree?**

10 'Sharpened to make a slaughter, Polished to flash like lightning!' Or shall we rejoice, the rod of My son despising every tree?

10 It's being sharpened for slaughter, and being polished to gleam like lightning.' "We shouldn't be rejoicing, should we, while my Son's scepter, the sword, is despising every tree?

10 It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree.

- The sharpening was in preparation for "slaughter" and the polishing was to make it lightning fast

- "...Or shall we rejoice" - should the people rejoice as they did in the past? In light of coming destruction, the answer was No.

- "...the rod of My son despising every tree" - the phrase depicts the sword being wielded like a rod against God's son. Israel is the son of God (Ex 4:22-23).

— "despising" - *mo'eseṭ*, "to abhor" or "to reject"

— "tree" - *ets*, could symbolize nations. This interpretation supports the idea that the sword specifically targeted Israel for punishment, rejecting every other "tree" (nation).
— So the emphasis is that this sword was specifically aimed at Israel, indicating that the people were not immune from the impending judgment

11 And it is given to be polished, so that it may be handled; the sword is sharpened and polished, to **hand it over to the slaughterer**.

11 It is given to be polished, that it may be handled; the sword is sharpened and polished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.

11 It's intended to be polished so it can be grasped in the hand. The sword is sharpened. It's polished for placement into the hand of the executioner."

11 And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.

- The preparation process of sharpening and polishing was now complete. The sword was ready to fulfill its purpose.

- "...hand it over to the slaughterer" - the identity of "the slaughterer" is given in v25

12 Cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against My people, it is against all the officials of Israel. They are turned over to the sword with My people, therefore **slap your thigh**.

12 Cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against My people, it is against all the officials of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with My people, therefore strike *your* thigh.

12 'Cry and wail, you Son of Man! It's headed against my people. It's also against all the princes of Israel, who have been tossed to the sword, along with my people. So it's time to grieve like you mean it,

12 Cry and howl, son of man: for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh.

- Ezekiel received instructions to cry and wail. He was to publicly mourn the fact that the sword would come upon God's people in general and all the princes of Israel in particular. No one would escape, regardless of their societal status.

- "...slap your thigh" - since all people in Judah would face death, Ezekiel was to smite his thigh as an expression of both grief and despair (Cf. Jer 31:19)

13 For there is a testing; and **what if even the rod which despises will cease to be?"** declares the Lord GOD.

13 For *there is* a testing; and what if even the rod which despises will be no more?" declares the Lord GOD.

13 because testing is sure to come. 'In putting the sword to the test along with the scepter, it won't keep on rejecting, will it?' declares the Lord GOD."

13 Because it is a trial, and what if the sword condemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord GOD.

- God reaffirms the fact that the trial/testing would surely come. The certainty comes from the fact that the sword is entirely capable of fulfilling God's purpose.

- "...what if even the rod which despises will cease to be" - it is important to recognize the connection between this verse and the cryptic statement in v10. There, it was stated that "the rod of My son despising every tree."

— Here, the same words are strung together to form a question: "what if even the rod which despises will cease to be?" The point of this question is that Israel would not be spared.

A Double and Triple Judgment

14 "You therefore, son of man, prophesy and clap your hands; and let the sword be doubled **the third time, the sword for the slain**. It is the sword for the great one slain, which surrounds them,

14 "You therefore, son of man, prophesy and clap *your* hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword for the slain. It is the sword for the great one slain, which surrounds them,

14 "Now, Son of Man, prophesy as you strike your hands together. Let the sword that fatally wounds be doubled and tripled. That great, slaughtering sword closes in on them. I've set in place a slaughtering sword at the entrance to all their gates,

14 Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers.

- Further instructions are given to Ezekiel...because of what was said in v8-13, Ezekiel was to clap his hands in grief and despair, but also in judgment

- "...the third time" - two possible interpretations, but of which show that God's sword is directed against Israel:

1. The first interpretation links to the historical events of Ezekiel's era. According to this view, the "first time" refers to the first deportation to Babylon (605 BC). The "second time" refers to the second deportation (597 BC), and the "third time" refers to the final destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC).

2. The second interpretation suggests that the "third time" refers to the future Tribulation period. This interpretation is supported by the larger context of Ezek 20-21. Here's the "first time" would symbolize the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, marking the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles. The "second time" would be the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the subsequent dispersion of the Jewish people. The "third time" would be the Tribulation period, specifically the second half (3-1/2 years).

- "...the sword for the slain" - the sword is given another name. It is mentioned twice in the verse to underscore its significance.

— Nebuchadnezzar's history does not align with the description of the fatal blow, as he was never "the great one slain." The identity of this one is given in v25.

15 so that their hearts will waver, and many fall at all their gates. I have granted the slaughter of the sword. Oh! It is made for striking like lightning, it is sharpened in readiness for slaughter.

15 that *their* hearts may melt, and many fall at all their gates. I have given the glittering sword. Ah! It is made *for striking* like lightning, it is wrapped up *in readiness* for slaughter.

15 so that their hearts melt and the number of those who stumble increase. I've set in place a slaughtering sword at the entrance to all their gates. Oh, no! It's made like lightning. It's drawn to slaughter.

15 I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied: ah! it is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter.

- God personally stationed the sword "at all their gates" so the hearts of the people would waver ("melt in fear") and "many [would] fall" in terror

16 Prove yourself sharp, go to the right; set yourself; go to the left, wherever your edge is ordered.

16 Show yourself sharp, go to the right; set yourself; go to the left, wherever your edge is appointed.

16 Be sharp! Attack on the right, or parry to your left, wherever you point your sword.

16 Go thee one way or other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set.

- God sarcastically urged His people to gather their armies to fight...

17 **I will also clap My hands**, and I will satisfy My wrath; I, the LORD, have spoken."

17 I will also clap My hands together, and I will appease My wrath; I, the LORD, have spoken."

17 I will also clap my hands; then my anger will subside. I, the LORD have spoken it."

17 I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said it.

- ...but none of their efforts would succeed until God's wrath was finally spent.

- "I will also clap My hands" - in v14 God instructed Ezekiel to clap his hands as a symbol of judgment; here, God Himself performed the same action. This shows how Ezekiel's gestures mirrored God's wrath.

The Identity of the Sword (v18-32)

Before determining the identity of the sword, it is important to remember that Ezek 20:45—21:32 is a highly parabolic (figurative; symbolic) passage. Therefore, interpreting the sword's identity involves understanding the parable that it represents. So far, Ezekiel has consistently referred to the sword as "God's sword," portraying YHWH as both the owner and the user of this instrument of judgment. Consequently, the human being wielding the sword on earth is essentially a tool controlled by God. Verses 18-32, where the sword is depicted as a symbol of a king, should be examined with this in mind. This section revisits the dual perspective that was introduced in v14.

Verses 18-32 first identify the sword as a king. Then the passage addresses the use of the sword the "first time" before moving to its role in the "third time." In both instances, the king's palace is in Babylon, so only the identity of the ruler changes: first as King Nebuchadnezzar, then as the deadly wounded figure, the Antichrist.

This passage also emphasizes that the sword is deployed against two nations: Israel (v18-27) and Ammon (v28-32). This contrast forms the framework for organizing the discussion of the entire segment.

(c) Sword is directed toward Jerusalem (21:18-27)

18 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

18 The word of the LORD came to me saying,

18 This message came to me from the LORD:

18 The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

- Indicates a new prophetic revelation...

19 "Now as for you, son of man, make two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city.

19 "As for you, son of man, make two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city.

19 "Now, Son of Man, demarcate two pathways by which the sword of Babylon's king will arrive in the land. Both pathways will lead from a single land. "Make a sign, carving it out and installing it at the junction on the way to the city.

19 Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city.

- This verse depicts the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, standing at a crossroads.

Ezekiel was instructed to mark out two roads, both starting from the same land (Babylon).

— Then, he was told to erect a signpost at the place where there was a fork in the road at the place where the road branched off to "the city."

20 You shall mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of **Ammon**, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem.

20 You shall mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem.

20 Set it to point one way for bringing the sword against Rabbah, the descendants of Ammon, and the other way against Judah and fortified Jerusalem.

20 Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced.

- These were the options available to Nebuchadnezzar at the crossroads: he could either advance toward Rabbah (in Ammon) or toward Judah and Jerusalem.

- "...Ammon" - Rabbah was the capital of Ammon, which corresponds to modern day Amman in Jordan

— The Ammonites joined Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon (Cf. Jer 27:3). Since both kingdoms were guilty of rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar intended to attack both, but was uncertain about which to prioritize.

— Coming from the north, if he chose the left path it would've led him to Rabbah in Ammon; if he chose the right path, it would've led him to Judah and Jerusalem.

21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the household idols, he looks at the liver.

21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the household idols, he looks at the liver.

21 "Meanwhile, Babylon's king is standing at the fork of the road, where he can head in either of two directions, and that's where he is practicing divination. Shaking his arrows, he's asking questions of his teraphim while he examines livers.

21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver.

- Describes the king's decision making process on which road to take. He used three forms of divination:

1. Belomancy - a method that involved placing arrows bearing the names of cities, people, or other entities into a quiver and shaking it. The first arrow to fall out determined the choice.
2. Necromancy - to confirm the first method, Nebuchadnezzar consulted the small household idols that resembled deceased individuals.
3. Hepatoscopy - an examination of the liver, which some pagan cultures believed to be the seat of life because it was filled with blood. Using a sheep or goat liver, a priest would determine decisions based on the organ's color or marks after it was killed.

22 Into his right hand came the divination, 'Jerusalem,' to set up battering rams, to open the mouth for slaughter, to raise the voice with a battle cry, to set up battering rams against the gates, to pile up assault ramps, to build a siege wall.

22 Into his right hand came the divination, 'Jerusalem,' to set battering rams, to open the mouth for slaughter, to lift up the voice with a battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build a siege wall.

22 On his right hand he is divining against Jerusalem, preparing to set up battering rams, preparing for the slaughter, getting ready to sound the alarm for battle, setting the battering rams in place at the gates, building siege mounds, and erecting a siege wall.

22 At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mound, and to build a fort.

- Apparently all three divinations favored the road leading to Judah and Jerusalem
- The Lord is not sanctioning the use of divination. He was just showing how the Babylonian king was going to do it and, of course, the Lord had it come out so that Jerusalem was the king's choice (Prov 16:33).

23 And **it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes; they have sworn solemn oaths. But he makes guilt known**, so that they may be seized.

23 And it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes; they have *sworn* solemn oaths. But he brings iniquity to remembrance, that they may be seized.

23 In their view, it will seem to be a false prophecy, but because they swore allegiance, he'll make them remember their guilt as he takes them captive."

23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken.

- "...it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes" - despite being forewarned about the impending attack, the people of Jerusalem drew some erroneous conclusions. They

themselves had engaged in divination, yet they had the audacity to accuse Nebuchadnezzar of employing false divination in their eyes.

— Even though the people of Judah perceived the king's decision to come against Jerusalem as the result of demonic deception, God declared that Nebuchadnezzar's plans would succeed. Once again, it was God's providence that ensured this outcome.

- "...they have sworn solemn oaths" - God declared that He would bring judgment upon people who had "sworn solemn oaths" referring to the allegiance Judah had pledged to Nebuchadnezzar (17:12-14; Cf. 2 Kings 24:1) , but had now violated (17:18-19).

- "...But he makes guilt known" - through His providence, God brought this iniquity (Israel breaking their oath to Nebuchadnezzar) to light. When Judah broke this oath, it was a *de facto* rebellion against God.

— In the ancient world, an oath was not just a political promise, it was a religious act. When Zedekiah swore loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, the oath was made in the name of the LORD (17:13). Ezekiel later says it was "God's oath" (17:19).

— So even though the oath was to a pagan king, God was a "witness" to the oath, the oath was made in God's authority, and breaking the oath profaned the name of God (Cf. Ex 20:7).

— God repeatedly states that Nebuchadnezzar's power was divinely appointed (Jer 27:6). Calling Nebuchadnezzar "My servant" does not mean he was righteous—it means that God was using him as an instrument of judgment.

— Therefore, resisting Nebuchadnezzar meant resisting God's decree, and breaking the oath meant rebelling against God's discipline. The heart of the issue is God's name and reputation: If Judah swore an oath by God, then violated that oath and justified it as "religious resistance," it would portray God as untrustworthy.

— God defends the sanctity of His holy name, even when His own people are under pagan rule

Verses 24-27 return to the sword of the "third time" mentioned in v14.

24 "Therefore, this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because you have made your guilt known, in that your offenses are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins are seen—because you have come to mind, you will be seized by the hand.

24 "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you will be seized with the hand.

24 Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: "Because you remembered your sins when your transgressions were uncovered, your sins are visibly evident in everything you've done. And since you've remembered them, you'll be taken captive.

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand.

- Verse 24 draws a picture of Jerusalem's destruction.

- "Therefore" - because of v18-23, the city would be taken. This verse adds a few other reasons for this judgment: the fact that the people made their "guilt known," that their "offenses were uncovered," and that their rebellious "deeds and sins are seen" (became undeniable). Because of all these things, the city would fall.

- The One remembering Israel's sins is God. Therefore, this judgment was certain. It began with the Babylonian Captivity, which started the times of the Gentiles, and will last until that period has ended.

- A study of eschatology shows that one day, the city of Babylon will be rebuilt and will become the global capital of the Antichrist (Cf. Is 13:1—14:23; Jer 50:1,9-10; Zech 5:5-11; Rev 14:8; 16:12-16).

- Thus, Babylon can be compared to two bookends that frame a long row of books on a shelf. One of the bookends is the Babylon of the past, the other the Babylon of the future. The books in between describe the various historical events that occurred as a result of the judgment that God imposed on His people due to their idolatry.

25 And you, **slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel**, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of **the end**,

25 And you, O slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end,

25 "So now, you dishonored and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come in this time of final punishment,

25 And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end,

- "...slain, wicked one" - first mentioned in v14, where we learned that the sword belongs to this individual that he was "great." We now also learn that he is "wicked."

- "...the prince of Israel" - we also learn that he is identified as the "prince of Israel."

Throughout Ezekiel, this term typically refers to Zedekiah. But Ezekiel never called Zedekiah a "king" because the rightful king (Jehoiachin, aka Jeconiah or Coniah) was still alive, albeit in exile (2 Kings 24:8-15; 25:27-30). Zedekiah was installed by Nebuchadnezzar as a vassal king, not by dynastic succession.

- Thus the phrase "prince of Israel" cannot refer to Zedekiah because he was never "slain" (deadly wounded), but was blinded and taken to Babylon in chains where he was imprisoned until his death (Cf. 2 Kings 25:6-7; Jer 39:6-7; 52:11).

— Nebuchadnezzar was also never "slain" (deadly wounded), but is believed to have died of an illness [Frauke Weiershäuser, Jamie Novotny, Giulia Lentini, eds., *The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Volume 2: The Royal Inscriptions of Amēl-Marduk (561–560 BC), Neriglissar (559–556 BC), and Nabonidus (555–539 BC), Kings of Babylon* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), p. 1].

— Only what we know of the final Gentile ruler during the Times of the Gentiles, the Antichrist, meet the requirements of this description.

- "...the end" - conveys a time reference, placing the event in the prophetic future, not during the time of the Babylonian Captivity

— The Antichrist will be the final Gentile ruler to trample the holy city of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24). He will be the slayer (v11) and will wield the sword for the third time (v14). However, Ezekiel made it clear that this last Gentile ruler, this deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, would perish.

The term "Antichrist" is used 5x in Scripture: 1 John 2:18 [2x]; John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7. The term itself simply means "against Christ." An "antichrist" is anyone who rejects both the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22), refuses to recognize Jesus as the Messiah (1 John 4:3), and denies Jesus' incarnation (2 John 7).

According to 1 John 2:18, there have been numerous individuals who fit this description. However, during the future Tribulation, a specific figure known as "the Antichrist" will appear on the political scene. According to Dan 2:42-44, the earth will be divided into ten kingdoms at that time. Dan 11:40-45 indicates that there will be a peace agreement between these ten kingdoms and the political figure of the Antichrist. However, a point will come when the Antichrist begins his move to take complete political control of the world by declaring war on the ten kings.

In his war against the ten kings (which will likely take place in the first half, just before the midpoint of the Tribulation), the Antichrist moves out militarily in conquest. He is seen marching against the north (v40,44; Syria), the south (v40,42-43; Egypt), and the east (v44; Mesopotamia). He will succeed in killing the kings of these regions (Cf. Dan 7:8,20,24). His conquest of Egypt opens the door for his conquest of Africa (v42-43). Finally, he will also invade Israel, the glorious land (v45; also Rev 11:1-2). He will set up the tents of his palace, or his military headquarters, between the sea and the glorious holy mountain, meaning the Temple Mount (v45). It is during this military campaign against the ten kings that the Antichrist is killed: Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him (v45b).

In Rev 13:3, John also mentions the death of the Antichrist. The phrase "as if it had been fatally wounded" does not imply mere apparent death, as it is also used of the Messiah in Rev 5:6. Instead, it is an idiom for a resurrected individual, and real death is involved.

Hence, during his confrontation with the ten kings, the Antichrist is killed. However, he will be resurrected by his father, Satan. As a result, he will gain control over the entire world (Rev 17:17) except for Jordan (Dan 11:41).

26 this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Remove the **turban** and take off the **crown**; this will no longer be the same. Exalt that which is low, and humble that which is high.

26 thus says the Lord GOD, 'Remove the turban and take off the crown; this *will* no longer be the same. Exalt that which is low and abase that which is high.

26 This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Remove your turban! Take off your crown! Things aren't going to remain as they used to be. What is lowly will be exalted, and what is lofty will be brought low.

26 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high.

- Verses 26-27 reiterate that the Times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar and will end with the Antichrist

- "...turban" - worn by the Jewish priest (Ex 28:4,37,39; 29:6; 39:28,31; Lev 8:9; 16:4). The removal of the turban means the removal of the priesthood.

- "...crown" - the royal diadem, symbolizing a ruler's authority (2 Sam 12:30). This refers to Judah's kingship, which, like the priestly turban, would "no longer be the same."

27 **Ruins, ruins, ruins**, I will make it! **This** also will be no longer until **He comes whose right it is**, and **I will give it to Him.**

27 A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it *to Him.*

27 A ruin! A ruin! I'm bringing about ruin!' But this also will not happen until he who has authority over it arrives, because I'll give it to him."

27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.

- This verse shows that the priesthood and kingship will only return to Israel once something specific happens

- "...Ruins, ruins, ruins" - *avvah*, distortion; overturn. The triple repetition is the strongest superlative in the Hebrew language.

- "...This" - refers to the turban and the crown (v26). It cannot refer to God's judgment because "this" is part of a series of feminine pronouns throughout v26-27, and there is no indication of a change in referent, so all these pronouns should refer to the same noun or idea.

— "This" cannot refer to judgment because it would not make sense to say that God makes judgment a ruin. Rather, "turban" and "crown" (v26) are the only feminine nouns that can

act as the referent for the entire chain of pronouns.

— So, "this also will be no longer" does not deal with how judgment will not come until an Individual arrives. Rather, it deals with how the turban (priesthood) and crown (kingship) will be no more until a particular Person comes.

— This verse reveals that during the Times of the Gentiles, neither priesthood nor kingship will return to Israel. Indeed Israel has not had a king since Babylon (the "first time," Cf. v14), and there has been no priesthood in Jerusalem since its destruction in 70 AD (the "second time").

- This verse clearly looks back, and properly interprets, Jacob's prophecy in Gen 49:10:
"The scepter will not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."

— In this verse, Jacob made a prophetic statement concerning his son Judah. While the exact wording of the statement varies between translations, most versions (including the NASB) use Shiloh as a proper name for the Messiah. However, instead it should be taken as a possessive pronoun.

— A better interpretation would be: "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes whose right it is, and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be." Ezek 21:27 echoes this interpretation of this verse, stating that Israel will lose both the priesthood and kingship until "he comes whose right it is" which points to the Messiah.

- "...until" - implies that a contingency that must be fulfilled before God returns the priesthood and kingship to Israel (see notes on Rom 11:25)

- "...He comes whose right it is" - only when this Person, whose right it is to rule, arrives on the scene (at the Second Coming) will things change in Judah

— "right" - *mishpat*, most general meaning is "judgment" but it also refers to someone's legal right, privilege, or due.

— Unfortunately most English translations do not explicitly convey the definite article *ha* (the) preceding *mishpat*. But this is significant because "*the* judgment" throughout the OT/Hebrew Bible refers to a legal verdict (Cf. Deut 17:9; 1 Kings 3:28; 7:7; Hosea 5:1).

— Thus, God giving judgment to the Messiah does not refer to the act of punishment, but rather God giving a certain legal ruling or pronouncement. This fits with a messianic interpretation where God the Father decides that Messiah will uphold both offices of King and Priest.

- "...I will give it to Him" - God Himself will give the right to rule and reign to the Son

The turban and the crown will not return to Israel until the Times of the Gentiles have run their course and the sword of Ezek 21 has been furbished for the third time and has done its job at the hands of the deadly wounded one (Antichrist). Then will come the One whose

right it is to take over both the kingship (Ps 2) and the priesthood (Gen 14:18; Ps 110:1-7). At His second coming, the Messiah will restore both of these things in Israel because God has declared that He would give the turban and crown to him (Cf. Zech 6:12-13).

David L. Cooper, founder and president of The Biblical Research Society, gives the following summary of the messianic implications of this passage:

In these verses the principal political actors of Israel's future appear upon the stage. Ezekiel's language shows that abortive efforts would be made at various times to place the royal crown and priestly turban upon the brows of these political aspirants to prestige and power. The statement, "I will overthrow," etc., is the divine decree which announces the judgment that shall fall upon all such efforts. The last one attempting to seize these honors is addressed by the prophet: "And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end, thus saith the Lord God: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown; this shall be no more the same." According to these verses, this last tyrant is a prince of Israel who seizes power in the time of the iniquity of the end but in some way is wounded with a deadly stroke. The prophet's words commanding this wicked prince to remove the crown and the mitre and informing him that such a thing shall be no more "until he come whose right it is" shows that this future one for whom both the royal and priestly dignities are reserved is a king and a priest at the same time. From these facts it is evident that the Messiah of Israel is referred to by the clause, "whose right it is." Since these words in Ezekiel's passage clearly refer to Israel's future king, and since they unmistakably point backward to Gen 49:10, it is evident that the similar phrase in Jacob's prediction also refers to her Messiah.

(d) Sword is directed toward Ammon (21:28-32)

28 "And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'This is what the Lord GOD says concerning the sons of Ammon and their taunting,' and say: 'A sword, a sword is drawn, sharpened for the slaughter, to make it consume, so that it may be like lightning—

28 "And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,' and say: 'A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be like lightning—

28 And now Son of Man, prophesy to the Ammonites that this is what the Lord GOD says to the Ammonites about their approaching humiliation: "A sword! A sword is being drawn for slaughter. It's polished to flash like lightning.

28 And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn: for the slaughter it is furbished, to consume because of the glittering:

- The focus now shifts from Judah and Jerusalem as the object of God's judgment, to Ammon. God issued a proclamation regarding the "taunting" of Ammon.

Ammon

Ammon and Jerusalem, though enemies, had allied against Babylon (Cf. Jer 27:1-3). When Nebuchadnezzar arrived at the crossroads (v21), Ammon sent ambassadors to surrender to Babylon instead. When Nebuchadnezzar decided to attack Jerusalem, Ammon was relieved and happy. They were thankful that Jerusalem would suffer in their place. The Ammonites actually rejoiced scornfully at Jerusalem's destruction (Cf. Ezek 25:3-6; Zeph 2:8). God took offense to this attitude as an insult to His people. Thus, He ordained that the sword, initially drawn, sharpened, and polished to be used against His people, now be turned against the Ammonites. Just as swiftly as it moved against Jerusalem, it would act with similar speed against the Ammonites.

29 while they see false visions for **you**, while they divine lies for **you**—to place **you** on the necks of the wicked who are killed, whose day has come, **in the time of the punishment of the end.**

29 while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the wicked who are slain, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end.

29 When they see empty visions about you while they're divining lies for you, to lay you on the necks of the wicked, who are fatally wounded, whose days have come, their time for punishment.

29 Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end.

- Ammon, like Nebuchadnezzar, had false diviners, who flattered them with assurances of safety. The only result of which will be to add the Ammonites to the *headless trunks* of the slain of Judah, and "whose day" of visitation for their guilt "has come."

- "...you" [3x] - their deceptive divinations would concern God's people, Israel

- The consequence for them believing these false visions would be judgment in the form of captivity ("necks") and death ("killed").

- "...in the time of the punishment of the end" - the time reference for this judgment. This same time reference is used in v25 in reference to the Antichrist. Thus, the judgment on Ammon described here will be in the prophetic future, during the time of the Tribulation.

30 Return it to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you.

30 Return *it* to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you.

30 Return it to its scabbard. "At the place where you were formed, in the land of your origin, there is where I'll judge you.

30 Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity.

- The sword against Ammon during the Tribulation period will only "return to its sheath" once it has fulfilled its purpose and the judgment has completed its course.

— While Ammon (modern day northern Jordan) will ensure significant devastation during this time, it will ultimately survive as a nation and become a possession of Israel in the millennial kingdom (Cf. Jer 49:1-2).

— Jer 49:6 indicates that a remnant of Ammon will be preserved for the millennial kingdom. Thus, peace will be established between Israel and northern Jordan through a combination of partial destruction and subsequent conversion. As a result, there will be a saved nation called "Ammon" during the millennial kingdom.

31 **I will** pour out My indignation on you; **I will** blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and **I will** hand you over to **brutal men, craftsmen of destruction**.

31 I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and I will give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction.

31 I'm going to pour out my indignation all over you. I'll blow my fierce wrath against you and deliver you into the control of brutal men who are skilled at destruction.

31 And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy.

- "I will" [3x] - the judgment on Ammon will be solely the work of God

- "...brutal men, craftsmen of destruction" - as if experiencing His anger and His wrath were not enough, God further says that He will deliver the nation into the hands of trained killers.

32 You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken."

32 You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken."

32 You'll be fuel for the conflagration. Your blood will be spilled throughout the land. You won't be remembered anymore, now that I, the LORD, have spoken."

32 Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered: for I the LORD have spoken it.

- Although God didn't disclose the duration of this judgment, only the time period in which it will take place, this verse implies that Ammon will remain forgotten until their eventual restoration (Cf. Jer 49:6).