

Ezekiel 21-23 • The Drawn Sword of the Lord

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Ezekiel chapter 21 is made up of 3 separate prophetic messages that were given to Ezekiel to proclaim to the people. Remember that Ezekiel was living in the Babylonian empire at the time, he had been taken into exile in the very first wave or invasion of the Babylonian army into Jerusalem and into Israel, and so he's been there.

He's with Daniel, he's with others, and he is speaking to those people, but he is speaking about the final invasion that is about to take place. In fact, we're hoping to get through 3 chapters tonight. We'll see how that goes, but if we do, these are the last 3 chapters before the final siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army.

And so these last messages are fairly dire from the standpoint of God speaking to the people and saying, this is it. In fact, this particular chapter is all about the sword of the Lord. The Lord is going to refer several times through this chapter of the sword that literally hangs over the people of Israel and He refers to that of course, as the coming judgment. So let's get into the first few verses here.

Verses 1 through 3, it says, *“The word of the Lord came to me: ² “Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries. Prophecy against the land of Israel ³ and say to the land of Israel, Thus says the Lord: Behold, I am against you and will draw my sword (there it is and it's going to be repeated several times) from its sheath and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked.”” (ESV)*

Now I need you to stop right there and the reason I need you to stop is because this particular passage has proved very troublesome for many believers along the lines. Particularly in light and I'm talking about this final statement where God says, I'm going to cut off both righteous and wicked, and that has really caused trouble for a lot of people. In fact, it caused so much trouble for the translators of the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, that they translated righteous as unrighteous. And they said, I'm going to cut off both wicked and unrighteous because to them, it just didn't make sense that God would say, I'm going to cut off the righteous with the wicked. The reason that

became troublesome or is troublesome to people is because you might remember earlier in the Book of Ezekiel here, God said that the wicked would die and the righteous would live. He said, every man will have to deal with his own sins and so forth and so that creates a problem.

But although we fail, I think to see it, God's Word often speaks of different kinds of judgment. There is temporal judgment and then there is a more long-term/eternal judgment. Many times what we're seeing here in the Old Testament, many times, it's temporal judgment. When God talks about people dying for their sins, He's talking about physical death, not necessarily eternal separation from God, and we fail to see that at times.

And the fact that God is saying in these first 3 verses that He will cut off both the righteous and the wicked is speaking of how even those people who are in right relationship with God; which is what righteous means, they often experience the same consequences and issues and problems as the wicked. In other words, they often get swept..., you know. And that's what He's saying here; the righteous are going to get swept from the city just like the wicked. In other words, there's going to be a flood of judgment that's going to wash into the area and even the righteous will be affected by it.

And the fact is, there are times when those who are walking with the Lord are negatively affected by judgments and things that are brought upon the world or the area because of those who are not walking with the Lord. And that's just the fact of the matter. I mean, we could bring up several different examples, you know. There were many famines and droughts that found their way into the land of Canaan and later the land of Israel, which affected everyone, including those people who were walking closely to you know, with the Lord. You'll remember that even, you know, when the nation of Israel was sent back into the wilderness for an additional 38 years, making a total of 40 years of wilderness wandering, not everybody wanted to go the way of the majority.

We know for sure of the fact that Joshua and Caleb were very much against returning back to Egypt. They said, let's do this, let's go, let's get into the land. We know Moses himself was very much convinced, this was God's will. But yet all 3 of those men, and I'm sure there were others, spent the next 38 years in the wilderness. So what we see are these biblical examples where those who are walking with the Lord are affected by whatever God's judgment may be toward those who are not walking with the Lord. The fact of the matter, you know, is, we like to compartmentalize sin or things like that and people will often say to me, well, is it really all that wrong if it doesn't affect anybody else? You know.

If I decide to live like this and I'm not hurting you by living this way, is that wrong? Well, you know, we don't know the consequences of our actions all the time. We don't know, we don't know how God's going to respond to our actions and how those things... Often our sins do have a cascade or a domino effect into the lives of our family members. Many times that's the case and although we may not want to think about it.

So you might be thinking to yourself as I'm talking about this, you might be thinking, well then what's the benefit of walking with the Lord? I mean, if good grief, if I'm just going to get pulled into all the hardships that the wicked bring on in this world, what good is it for me to walk with the Lord if I'm just going to get sucked into all this negative junk?

Well, the answer to that is summed up in a wonderful parable that our Lord taught and I'm going to put it up on the screen for you. From Matthew chapter 7, check this out, He says,

Matthew 7:24-27 (ESV)

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

The reason I like this passage so much is because it contains a very wonderful promise related to these things and contained in these verses we hear that, no matter what comes, the house of the one who hears and obeys will not fall. But I want you to remember something about this parable too, the house of the person who is walking with the Lord experiences all the same junk; all the same wind and waves and floodwaters that are plaguing the other man, and actually taking his house down, are coming against your life as well.

Here's the difference and this is the reason we brought up this parable, because we raised the question, what's the benefit then of walking with the Lord if I'm going to go through all this junk? Here's the benefit, your house will stand, I think that's a benefit, personally. God made a promise through this parable to you and to me that our house will stand. Yes, you may have to go through some very challenging situations or circumstances that are brought on by the sins of others, but your house will stand and that's an important thing to remember.

So, Verse 4, let's keep reading. *“Because I will cut off from you both righteous and wicked, therefore my sword shall be drawn from its sheath against all flesh from south to north. ⁵ And all flesh shall know that I am the Lord. I have drawn my sword from its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again.”* Or put back.

So repeatedly we hear about this, the sword of the Lord; quite obviously a symbol of God's judgment. Verse 6 is very interesting now, check this out. *“As for you, son of man, groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan before their eyes.”* Or if you will, in their presence. Ezekiel is told here by the Lord to walk around and in the presence of the people to audibly groan, be groaning in front of the people. And you might notice here that it says, he is to groan with breaking heart, did you read that? Do you know what? That's for you and me. In other words, that's for a modern audience because do you know what the original Hebrew says? It says, groan with breaking loins. Because you see, in that time, the loins, they didn't think so much about the heart, I mean, they did, but the loins were considered to be the strength of a man.

And so He says, groan with breaking strength or diminished strength, if you will. It's really, it's talking about a real breakdown of life and strength and that sort of thing. So, He's talking about more here than just emotional grief. And the Lord says in verse 7, if you look with me, *“And when they say to you, ‘Why do you groan?’ (or why are you groaning, Ezekiel?) you shall say, ‘Because of the news that it is coming. Every heart will melt, and all hands will be feeble; every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming, and it will be fulfilled,’” declares the Lord God.”* So, isn't that interesting, he's to get their attention by groaning audibly, loudly and when they ask him why he's groaning, he's telling them that because it is coming.

Now I think that this groaning also projects something else that it's important for us to see and that is that God is not happy about this judgment that is coming. These are His people, these are the people that He has poured Himself into. This is the one group of people on the face of the earth that He has made a personal covenant with through the law and so forth. And yet now their city and their nation is being destroyed and decimated by an invading army. Even though these people living in Babylon at the time still don't believe it. Here they are in exile and they still believe they're going to get off the hook and go home soon. And yet Ezekiel is told to tell them in no uncertain terms, it will be fulfilled.

Now, in verse 8, we begin another word from the Lord given to Ezekiel and it says, *“And the word of the Lord came to me: ⁹ “Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus says the Lord, say: “A sword, a sword is sharpened and also polished,*

¹⁰ *sharpened for slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! (Or shall we rejoice? You have despised the rod, my son, with everything of wood.)*” Interesting phrase. In other words, the Lord is saying, everything that I have said and done through the prophets to warn you about your sin, to encourage you to repent, you have rejected and ignored those messages. Even though I've asked you to return to me with all of your hearts and you have responded by despising my discipline and you did it with the wood by which you created idols to worship.

So He goes on to say in verse 11, *“So the sword is given to be polished, that it may be grasped in the hand. It is sharpened and polished to be given into the hand of the slayer.”* ¹² *Cry out and wail, son of man, for it is against my people. It is against all the princes of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with my people. Strike therefore upon your thigh.”* And that's what the actual Hebrew says, your Bible may say, strike your hands together or the NIV translates that phrase, therefore beat your breast because that's more of an accurate rendering of what it means, rather than what it says. This was a gesture, this striking your hands on upon your thigh that was meant to express grief.

It's not something we do, you know what I mean. There's a lot of gestures that remain in the Middle East today that are completely unknown to us. I don't know if you remember when the Iraq empire fell. Do you guys remember seeing those videos when they were pulling down statues of Saddam Hussein and people were taking off their sandals and hitting the statue? Well, that was a gesture of contempt; showing contempt for a fallen ruler. Yeah, we would, I wouldn't take off my shoe and hit something, that just doesn't mean anything in our culture. And neither would striking my hand against my thigh mean anything except giddy up maybe or something like that, you know. But, these things had their meanings in that culture and you're going to see it again as we go on in the next chapter I believe.

Verse 13, *“For it will not be a testing—what could it do if you despise the rod?” declares the Lord God.*” This is a somewhat challenging verse to translate in the Hebrew, as you'll see if you compare it in some different translations. But He goes on in verse 14 to say, *“As for you, son of man, prophesy. Clap your hands (and again, this is literally in the Hebrew, strike your hands) and let the sword come down twice, yes, three times, ...”* Now again, that command to clap your hands or strike your hands as the NIV and the New King James have it. Again, some kind of an expression of derision or contempt. Kind of lost on us today because we clap our hands to show approval and it was exactly the opposite and so it becomes a little bit lost on a modern audience.

We're still in verse 14 in the middle of that, where He says, "... *the sword for those to be slain. It is the sword for the great slaughter, which surrounds them,* ¹⁵ *that their hearts may melt, and many stumble. At all their gates I have given the glittering sword. Ah, it is made like lightning; it is taken up for slaughter.* ¹⁶ *Cut sharply to the right; set yourself to the left, wherever your face is directed.*" Verse 16 is interesting, the NIV renders it as, O sword, slash to the right, then to the left, wherever your blade is turned and that is the essence of what is meant there.

Verse 17 says, "*I also will clap my hands, (now this is the Lord speaking) and I will satisfy my fury; I the Lord have spoken.*" So once again, the Lord says, I too will clap my hands. Again, that gesture or expression of derision and judgment and so forth.

Verse 18, we have then another word from the Lord. He says, "*The word of the Lord came to me again:* ¹⁹ *As for you, son of man, mark two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come. Both of them shall come from the same land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to a city.* ²⁰ *Mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites and to Judah, into Jerusalem the fortified.*

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 teraphim; he looks at the liver.*" Stop there, what in the world is this all about? God is showing Ezekiel that the king of Babylon is on his way, but he's come to what you and I would call kind of a fork in the road, and he's trying to decide, should I attack the Ammonites first or should I go against Judah and attack the city of Jerusalem, and he's deciding what to do.

Well, how do pagan kings decide what to do? Well, they use divination, very simple. And He's simply mentioning some of the methods of divination that were used during that time. He talks about shaking the arrows, we don't even really know what that means. He talks about consulting the teraphim, we don't know what that means, He talks about looking at the liver, yuck. They would literally kill an animal, pull out its liver and look at it and however it looked, that would give them direction. Kind of a strange way of figuring out the will of the gods, right?

But yet they would do it and God is telling Ezekiel that the king of Babylon, even now is divining which way to go? Am I going to go against the Ammonites? Am I going to go against Jerusalem? Well, God is going to

communicate here in the following verse, I'm in charge of those divination responses. Now that might mess with your theology a little bit.

I don't know if that does, but God is going to tell Ezekiel, I'm going to make sure he goes to Jerusalem. And He's going to say here at the end of the chapter, doesn't mean the Ammonites are off the hook, their number's up too, but Jerusalem's going to get it first and you know why? Because I'm in charge.

Even when people are dumb and they use ridiculous methods of paganistic divination, I'm still in charge. Isn't that interesting? So, you know, I don't know if you've got any relatives who are into things like horoscopes or ouija boards or dumb things like that, which, you know. And I'll just tell you right now, those can be dangerous, they can be dangerous. But that doesn't mean that God is sitting back and thinking, well, there's nothing I can do in this person's life, because they're consulting all these other, they're not talking to me. If they would talk to me, they'd be okay, but they're not talking to me, they're using these tarot cards or ouija boards or things like that.

Hey, God's still in charge, He can bring about the purpose of His will through the most incredible means, even investigating the liver or shaking the arrow. I don't even know what that is, I don't know if that was drawing straws or what. Anyway, so this is what's going on.

Verse 22, *“Into his right hand comes the divination for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth with murder, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build siege towers.”* God is saying, it's going to fall to Jerusalem.

“²³ But to them (now the them refers to the Israelites, okay?) it will seem like a false divination. They have sworn solemn oaths, (meaning that the people had sworn an oath of loyalty to the king of Babylon, not that they kept it, but they swore an oath) but he brings their guilt to remembrance, (in other words, He comes because they have been disobedient to that oath and) that they may be taken.

²⁴ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have made your guilt 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 shall be taken in hand. ²⁵ And you, O profane wicked one, prince of Israel, (and He's talking now about King Zedekiah, who was the last king of Judah, although He calls him a prince of Israel) whose day has come, the time of your final punishment, ²⁶ thus says the Lord God: Remove the turban and take off the

crown. (in other words, you are no longer going to be king) Things shall not remain as they are. (in other words, the kingship is coming to an end) Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted.”

Now I want you to be very careful to take note of verse 27 and I'll tell you why. This is one of the very first references here in the Book of Ezekiel to the Messiah, okay? This is a messianic promise, listen to this. Verse 27, “*A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him.*”

Now, that word it, is the kingship, the throne, the throne of Israel, right? And so He says, a ruin I will make of the kingship or the throne of Israel. I'm going to make a ruin of it and it shall not be. In other words, it will not exist and we haven't had a king of Israel since then, isn't that crazy? Since then there has been no king of Israel. Cause God said, I'm going to bring it to ruin and it shall not be until He comes. This is talking about the coming of Jesus, the one to whom judgment belongs.

What does the Bible say? When Jesus comes, He's going to bring judgment, isn't He? He comes to judge the nations and He says, and I will give it to Him. That throne will be given to the one to whom it belongs: Jesus Christ. So this is a wonderful, wonderful passage. Let me show you, I sometimes love to read some of the old commentaries. Let me put up on the screen how Matthew Henry kind of conveys this verse.

There shall be no more kings of the house of David after Zedekiah till Christ comes, whose right the kingdom is, who is the seed of David, in whom the promise was to have its full accomplishment, and I will give it to him.

– Matthew Henry

I love that, very well spoken. All right, now, this is that part of the chapter where the Lord turns. Remember He said earlier that the king of Babylon was divining where to go; whether to the Ammonites first or to Israel, to Jerusalem. But now He's going to talk about the Ammonites and this is where He tells them, your goose is just as cooked. So here we go.

Verse 28, “*And you, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord God concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach; (which is another way of really talking about their sin) say, (to them) A sword, a sword is drawn for the slaughter. It is polished to consume and to flash like lightning—²⁹ while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the profane wicked, whose day has come, the*

time of their final punishment. ³⁰ *Return it to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, (God says) I will judge you.* ³¹ *And I will pour out my indignation upon you; I will blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and I will deliver you into the hands of brutish men, skillful to destroy.* ³² *You shall be fuel for the fire. (and listen to this) Your blood shall be in the midst of the land. You shall be no more remembered, for I the Lord have spoken.”* And what that means, when God says, you will be no more remembered, is that you will cease to be a people.

Chapter 22. Ezekiel chapter 22 is a kind of a divine expose or a report, if you will, on the sinful condition of Jerusalem as God sees it. It's a fairly lengthy chapter but it is given to us as a declaration of their guilt. And as in the last chapter, this chapter also includes 3 separate words that are given to Ezekiel related to the sin of Israel and this is kind of God's final judgment, if you will.

Think of it like this, you know how before sentencing, a judge will look at the condemned person, the accused, and he will read the charges essentially against them. These are the charges against you. This is what God is doing in this chapter, He is reading the charges, the record and so it is what it is.

“And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to her all her abominations.” And that first verse pretty much outlines what this chapter is all about. It's a declaration of the abominations of the people of Jerusalem.

“³ You shall say, Thus says the Lord God: A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time may come, (and that means that her time of judgment may come) and that makes idols to defile herself! ⁴ You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time of your years has come. (in other words, your end is at hand) Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. ⁵ Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you; your name is defiled; you are full of tumult.” And the word tumult means uproar or pandemonium, right? Chaos.

⁶ “Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. ⁷ Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. ⁸ You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths. ⁹ There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst. ¹⁰ In

you men uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity.

¹¹ One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter. ¹² In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me (God says, and this is the interesting thing) you have forgotten, declares the Lord God.” Isn't that interesting?

He says, you do all these things, you've remembered how to do all these things and yet me, you have forgotten. It's almost like the Lord is incredulous, you know. You're so adept at doing all these sins and yet you've just forgotten me.

He says in verse 13, “*Behold, (and here's this reference again) I strike my hand at the dishonest gain that you have made, and at the blood that has been in your midst. ¹⁴ Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it. ¹⁵ I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will consume your uncleanness out of you. ¹⁶ And you shall be profaned by your own doing in the sight of the nations, and you shall know that I am the Lord.*” So that's the conclusion of the first word.

The next one begins in verse 17. “*And the word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁸ “Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to me; ... ”*” Just in case you're not familiar with it, dross is made up of the impurities that rise to the surface when certain metals; soft metals, such as silver and gold and bronze and others are heated up and liquefied, that dross will rise to the surface. And this was a common way of getting the impurities out of metals so that they would be pure. They would heat them up and then they would scrape the dross away and they would throw it away because it was good for nothing, it was worthless. And that's what the Lord is saying: you've become dross to me, that's not a good thing.

Middle of verse 18, He says, “*...all of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace; they are dross of silver. ¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. ²⁰ As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. ²¹ I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it. ²² As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be*

melted in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the Lord; I have poured out my wrath upon you.”

And then the third and final word that makes up Ezekiel chapter 22 and it's a word against the prophets, priests and princes, all right. ²³ *“And the word of the Lord came to me: ²⁴ “Son of man, say to her, (and again, that's a female reference to the land essentially) You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation. ²⁵ The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.*

²⁶ *Her priests have done violence to my law (the very ones who should've been upholding it) and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, (referring really to the whole Book of Leviticus) and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. (and then He says)*

²⁷ *Her princes (and that's a word for kings) in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. ²⁸ And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ when the Lord has not spoken. ²⁹ The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.*

³⁰ *And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. ³¹ Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord God.”* So there you have kind of the indictment if you will, of chapter 22. This is the reading of the sins of the people.

Now, chapter 23, we're going to go through pretty quickly here because really this is just another parable or message. And these read rather quickly because they're essentially in story form and this is about 2 daughters. And these daughters represent the capital cities of the northern and southern kingdoms that make up the nation of Israel. You'll remember that the capital city of the northern kingdom, which was called Israel or retained the name of Israel was Samaria. That was the city that was the capital, the southern kingdom, which took the name Judah after the name of the largest tribe that inhabited that region

had a capital city, of course, called Jerusalem. So Samaria and Jerusalem are being spoken of here symbolically in story form as 2 daughters, 2, if you will, wicked daughters.

Now I'm going to tell you as we get into this. There's some graphic text in this chapter that relates to the sexual expressions of unfaithfulness that can happen in a marriage. But in this parable, remember, it's a parable there, those sexual expressions are being used to speak of spiritual unfaithfulness, or if you will, spiritual adultery. But remember, God is the husband in this case, Israel is the wife in this case, and so it truly was an act of adultery against Him. And so He's going to tell a parable, tell a story, which defines this thing in fairly graphic terms. So you've been warned, here we go.

“The word of the Lord came to me: ² “Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. ³ They played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and their virgin bosoms handled.” Now He's talking about in Egypt, when they lived in Egypt for 400 years, it says they took on the paganistic ways of the peoples there in Egypt.

Now He's going to name them in verse 4. *“Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.”* And by the way, in case you're wondering what those names mean, it's very interesting. Ohola simply means tent and Oholibah means my tent is in her. Which is really interesting because, obviously, to a wayfaring people, a tent is a place of dwelling, right? And so, He is referring here to His own presence or His own dwelling among them.

He speaks of the people of Israel as being a dwelling, but of the nation of Judah, who's, again, capital city is Jerusalem. He says, my dwelling was in her. Of course, He's referring to the fact that the temple was in Jerusalem, it was never in Samaria. Samaria was always a pagan city with pagan temples, okay. So, He says, my tent was in Jerusalem, Samaria was simply a tent. He doesn't even recognize it because it was always pagan, all right.

Verse 5, *“Oholah played the whore while she was mine, and she lusted after her lovers the Assyrians, warriors ⁶ clothed in purple, governors and commanders, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. ⁷ She bestowed her whoring upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them, and she defiled herself with all the idols of everyone after whom she lusted. ⁸ She did not give up her whoring that she had begun in Egypt; ...”* Check that out, okay?

So the northern kingdom of Israel, it was involved in paganism while they lived in Egypt. They never ever gave it up and they became a northern kingdom and they continued their ways. I find that very interesting, she did not give it up.

He says, middle of verse 8, “...for in her youth men had lain with her and handled her virgin bosom (and He's talking about what began in Egypt) and poured out their whoring lust upon her. ⁹ Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, (and He explains what He means by that) into the hands of the Assyrians, after whom she lusted.” You'll remember the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrian empire, right? All right.

He says in verse 10, “These uncovered her nakedness; they seized her sons and her daughters; and as for her, they killed her with the sword; and she became a byword among women, when judgment had been executed on her.” Now, remember her or she is referring to Samaria, not all of the people of Israel. The thing you got to remember guys, is during that time of great paganism and apostasy for the northern kingdom of Israel, those 10 people of those tribes in those 10 tribes, many of the people, made their way down to the southern kingdom.

For the same reason people are moving to states like Texas, South Dakota, Florida today in the United States of America, because people are moving to places where they think they're going to be freer. Where they're going to be free to worship, they're going to be..., you know, that sort of thing. It's happening even here in the United States, it happened in Israel and Judah as well.

So when God says here, that I allowed the Assyrians to kill her with the sword. He's not saying He put an end to all of the northern 10 tribes, He put an end to Samaria. But many of those people made their way down into the southern kingdom and lived in the southern kingdom because there were good kings, godly kings down in the southern kingdom. So, I wanted to make sure that we understood that. There are no lost 10 tribes of Israel, God doesn't lose anything, all right. So just an important thing to remember.

Verse 11, “Her sister Oholibah (remember that is now Jerusalem) saw this, (saw that she had been taken by the Assyrians) and she became more corrupt than her sister in her lust and in her whoring, which was worse than that of her sister. ¹² She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and commanders, warriors clothed in full armor, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men. ¹³ And I saw that she was defiled; they both took the same way. ¹⁴ But she carried her whoring further. She saw men portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion, (and vermilion is the color red and

that's what some translations say, portrayed or arrayed in red) ¹⁵ *wearing belts on their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them having the appearance of officers, a likeness of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea.*

¹⁶ *When she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea.* ¹⁷ *And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoring lust. (and this is talking about bringing their paganistic ways into the southern kingdom of Judah.) And after she was defiled by them, she turned from them in disgust.”*

And this is kind of a parable way of saying that, she turned away from the Babylonians after they defiled her, after they ravaged her, if you will, with their paganistic ways and the worship of their pagan gods. She turned away from them and that speaks of how she betrayed the oath that she had made to Babylon

Verse 18, *“When she carried on her whoring so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, (now, the Lord is speaking here) as I had turned in disgust from her sister.* ¹⁹ *Yet she increased her whoring, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt* ²⁰ *and lusted after her lovers there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses.* ²¹ *Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom and pressed your young breasts.* ²² *Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord God: (again, the Lord speaking to Jerusalem) “Behold, I will stir up against you your lovers from whom you turned in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side:”*

Isn't that interesting that both Israel and Judah each had their paganistic affairs with a particular nation and God brought those nations ultimately against them. What is that a picture of for you and for me? Well, it's a picture of the sin that we engage in, actually coming back to haunt us and ruin our relationships, ruin our lives. It's kind of speaks of the seasons of sin.

You know how the Bible talks about seasons of sin. When you're in the springtime of your sin, oh it's wonderful, this is great. And then you've got that summer season of sin, it's great. Oh, we're on the beach getting warm, playing in the waves, this is great. You're sinning up a storm, but eventually that season comes to an end and pretty soon you begin to feel the fall begin to creep in and it's colder now during the day. And the leaves are beginning to turn and fall

from the trees and the beauty of the trees begins to fade with just the branches, the bare branches of the trees.

And you realize, and this happens in sin too. We begin to get, we're still sinning up a storm, but it's not, we're not getting satisfaction like we used to. It's not making us happy, but it used to. So we're going to keep doing it because it used to make us happy. This is kind of what He's talking about. He says, you remembered the days of your youth in Egypt, in the summertime of your youth and so you went back and you did it, but it failed to satisfy. And eventually you turned in disgust from your sin and that's what happens in the winter. The winter season of our sin eventually settles in and we are disgusted with it and we turn from it, but we have nowhere to turn because all around us is freezing cold and there's no warmth left in the sun and we are miserable.

Now, I said there's nowhere to turn of course, you know, you know, there is somewhere to turn ultimately, and that is to our Lord and Savior and to come and bring your sin to the cross. But you know, there are some people who don't do that. They are just consumed by their sin ultimately, it just consumes them and they're gone. And that's what He's talking about here as it relates to Israel and Judah.

You gave yourself to your lovers and you enjoyed it in the spring and summer of your sin, but the fall set in and then finally the winter and you were literally taken by your sin. And God says, I turned in disgust, I turned away in disgust. And He says, again, at the end of verse 22, “*...I will bring them against you from every side:*”

Verse 23, “*the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, (because the Assyrians had been assumed by the Babylonians by this time) desirable young men, governors and commanders all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses.* ²⁴ *And they shall come against you from the north with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples. They shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their judgments.*

²⁵ *And I will direct my jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in fury. They shall cut off your nose and your ears, and your survivors shall fall by the sword. They shall seize your sons and your daughters, and your survivors shall be devoured by fire.* ²⁶ *They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels.* ²⁷ *Thus I will put an end to your lewdness and your*

whoring begun in the land of Egypt, so that you shall not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.”

Did you notice God made a promise there? He says, I'm going to put an end to it and He isn't saying, I'm going to put an end to you. He says, I'm going to put an end to your paganistic prostitution and He did. You'll remember we've mentioned before that when the Israelites came back from exile after 70 years in Babylon, they no longer dealt with paganism, they'd been cured. He had literally taken it from them, just as He promised here in verse 27.

“For thus (verse 28 says) says the Lord God: Behold, I will deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate, (and that's what happens when we're consumed by our sin, we're literally given over to it) into the hands of those from whom you turned in disgust, ²⁹ and they shall deal with you in hatred and take away all the fruit of your labor and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whoring shall be uncovered. (in other words, your sin will be seen for what it is) Your lewdness and your whoring ³⁰ have brought this upon you, because you played the whore with the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. ³¹ You have gone the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand. ³² Thus says the Lord God:

“You shall drink your sister's cup (and that's the cup of wrath) that is deep and large; you shall be laughed at and held in derision, for it contains much; ³³ you will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow. A cup of horror and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria; ³⁴ you shall drink it and drain it out, and gnaw its shards, and tear your breasts; for I have spoken, declares the Lord God. ³⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring.

³⁶ The Lord said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Declare to them their abominations. ³⁷ For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. With their idols they have committed adultery, and they have even offered up to them for food the children whom they had borne to me. ³⁸ Moreover, this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my Sabbaths.

³⁹ For when they had slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. And behold, this is what they did in my house. ⁴⁰ They even sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and behold, they came. For them you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments. ⁴¹ You sat

on a stately couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed my incense and my oil. ⁴² The sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and with men of the common sort, drunkards were brought from the wilderness; and they put bracelets on the hands of the women, and beautiful crowns on their heads.

⁴³ “Then I said of her who was worn out by adultery, ‘Now they will continue to use her for a whore, even her!’ ⁴⁴ For they have gone in to her, as men go in to a prostitute. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, lewd women! ⁴⁵ But righteous men shall pass judgment on them with the sentence of adulteresses, and with the sentence of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands.”

⁴⁶ For thus says the Lord God: “Bring up a vast host against them, and make them an object of terror and a plunder. ⁴⁷ And the host shall stone them and cut them down with their swords. They shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses. ⁴⁸ Thus will I put an end to lewdness in the land, (there it is again, God says I'm going to end it) that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done. ⁴⁹ And they shall return your lewdness upon you, and you shall bear the penalty for your sinful idolatry, and you shall know that I am the Lord God.” And that's where we're going to stop for tonight and we will come to basically that final invasion of Jerusalem next time. So let's close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, these are challenging verses to read. You know, any passages related to judgment are hard, really hard to hear. And we thank you, God, that we can get into your Word and that we can read it and understand it, but it still is hard because we don't like to see you, God, as a God of judgment. We don't like it, it makes us uncomfortable, we would rather see you as a God of mercy and grace. But Lord, help us to remember that even during this time when you poured out your wrath on your people Israel, you are still walking in mercy and grace toward them. And you brought them back to the land and you established them in the land and you cured them of their idolatry, which was killing them.

Lord, help us to see beyond the harsh words and to see that you are still a God of mercy and tenderness and love and restoration but Lord, help us always to remember too, that you are a God of holiness. You are holy and you cannot abide sin.

I thank you, Lord, that our sin has been taken up and Jesus has drunk the cup of your wrath on our behalf and we thank you for that today. And we relish the work that Jesus accomplished for us and the forgiveness that is ours. Thank you, Lord, for your goodness and grace, in Jesus precious name we pray, amen.