

The Book of Ezekiel
Chapters 18-21: God is Just (Part 4)
Lesson 23 “Divine Responsibility” (Part 3)
Ezekiel 20:45:-21:32 (ANSWERS)
February 21, 2021

Recap from Lesson 21:

1. **Israel in the Wilderness (Ezek. 20:13-26)**
 - a. After leaving Sinai, the Jews marched to **Kadesh Barnea**, where the Lord told them to enter Canaan and claim their promised **Inheritance**. (Num. 13-14)
2. **Israel in the Promised Land (Ezek. 20:27-30)**
 - a. **Joshua** brought the people into Canaan and led them in the defeat of the enemy and the claiming of the land.
3. **Israel in Exile in Babylon (Ezek. 20:31-32)**
 - a. This is the **Practical** application of the message to the people in Ezekiel’s generation: They were living just like their fathers.
4. **Israel’s Future Kingdom (Ezek. 20:33-44)**
 - a. Ezekiel had made it very clear to the elders why they were not qualified to inquire of God, but he not **End** his message there.
 - i. God in His grace gave a **Message of Hope** for the people, though they certainly did not deserve it.

Lesson 22

Background:

- In the Hebrew Scripture, **Chapter 21** begins with **20:45**, and this is the best arrangements, for **20:45-49** introduces the **Coming** judgment on Judah and Jerusalem.
- Now Ezekiel focuses on the fact that God has a responsibility to punish His people when they **Rebel** against Him. He must be true to His character and true to His covenant.
1. **Divine Responsibility (Ezek. 20:45-21:32)**
 - a. **God Identifies His Target (20:45-49)**
 - i. Frequently in this book, God commanded His servant to **“Set His Face”** against something or someone (**20:46; 13:17; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2**).
 1. This was one way to point out the “Target” at which His judgment would be hurled, in this case, **Judah** and Jerusalem. (**Ezek. 21:1-2**)
 2. Using the image of a **Forest** fire, he described the invasions of the Babylonians and the destruction of the Jewish nation.
 - a. When you study **Chapter 21**, you learn that the fire represents the deadly **Swords** of the Soldiers and that the **“South”** represents Judah and Jerusalem.
 3. According to **Ezekiel 20:1**, it was the year 591 BC when he gave these messages, so in **Five** years, the Babylonians would set fire to the **Holy City**, and the temple.
 - b. **God Draws the Sword (Ezek. 21:1-7)**

- i. The word “Sword” is used 19 times in this chapter to represent the **Invasion** and **Attack** of the Babylonian army.
 - 1. God has His eye on three targets: The **Land** of Judah, the **City** of Jerusalem, and the **Holy Temple**.
- ii. At this point, God commanded Ezekiel to perform another “Action sermon” by **Groaning** like a man experiencing great Pain and **Grief**.
 - 1. The news did not come until **January 8, 585 BC (Ezek. 33:21-22)**, five months after the city had been burned, which was August 14, 586 BC, but the Lord told Ezekiel that the news was coming.
- c. **God Sharpens His Sword (Ezek. 21:8-17)**
 - i. In this second “Action sermon,” Ezekiel not only Cried and wailed, but he **Smote** his thigh (**Vs. 12**), and **Clapped** his hands together (**Vss. 14, 17**).
 - 1. Despising the King of Judah (**Vs. 13**), the sword of Babylon would turn Judah’s **Scepter** into nothing but a **Stick (Vs. 10)!**
 - a. The invading soldiers would be so effective that one swordsman would do the work of **Three (Vs. 14)**, and for the Jews there would be **No** escape (**Vs. 16**).
- d. **God Directs the Army (Ezek. 21:18-27)**
 - i. The pagan nations of that day used many forms of divinations to **Discern** the will of the gods, and Ezekiel pictured the Babylonian army at a **Fork** in the road, trying to discover which way to go.
 - 1. Should they go to **Rabbath**, the capital of Ammon, and attack the Ammonites, or should they go to Jerusalem and attack the Jews?
 - 2. It was God’s will that the army attack Jerusalem, so He **Overruled** the soothsayers and diviners and made sure their decision was for Jerusalem.
 - ii. **Nebuchadnezzar** decided to attack Jerusalem, so he appointed his captains and made his plans.
 - 1. The people in Jerusalem were hoping he would attack the Ammonites, and when the word came that Jerusalem was his **Target**, they hoped the diviners would say they had made a **Mistake**.
 - 2. But God was in control and there had been no mistake. King Zedekiah had sworn an **Oath** of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar and had broken it, and Nebuchadnezzar would not **Stand** for this kind of rebellion from a weak vassal state.
 - iii. Ezekiel paused to give a special message to Zedekiah, whom he **Refuses** to call a king but refers to as a prince.
 - 1. He calls him **Profane** and Wicked, a man who has committed iniquity and will suffer because of it.
 - iv. But once again, the Lord added a brief word of hope: The **Messiah** would one day come, the true Son of David, and Israel’s King, and would claim the Davidic crown and **Reign** over His people (**Vs. 27**).
- e. **God Completes the Task (Ezek. 21:28-32)**
 - i. But what about the **Ammonites?**

1. They would **Rejoice** to see Babylon ravage the land of Judah and set fire to Jerusalem and the temple. (**Ezek. 25**)
 2. Their own false prophets and diviners would give them a false hope that they had been **Sparred**, and God had told Nebuchadnezzar to put his sword on its **Sheath**.
- ii. The message closed with another **Fire** (**Ezek. 20:47-48**), but this time a **Furnace** in which ore was melted.
1. God would **“Blow”** against the furnace and make it hotter, and then He would pour out the molten metal on His enemies.
 2. The Ammonites would become **Fuel** for the fire, and the nation would Disappear from the earth.

Conclusion:

- We come away from the study of **Chapters 18 to 21** with a fresh realization of the tragedy of **Rebellion** against the Lord.
- If any people had the **Obligation** to obey and serve the Lord, it was Israel, for the Lord had blessed them abundantly.
 - Instead of becoming a holy nation to the glory of God, she became like all the other nations and Failed to be God’s light to the Gentiles.
 - **Historically** speaking, weak King Zedekiah was the last ruler of the Davidic Dynasty, but not **Prophetically** speaking; for Jesus Christ, the Son of David, will one day come and reign from David’s throne.

