

CHAPTER 21

In this chapter we have,

- I. An explication of the prophecy in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the fire in the forest, which the people complained they could not understand (v. 1-5), with directions to the prophet to show himself deeply affected with it (v. 6, 7).
- II. A further prediction of the sword that was coming upon the land, by which all should be laid waste; and this expressed very emphatically (v. 8-17).
- III. A prospect given of the king of Babylon's approach to Jerusalem, to which he was determined by divination (v. 18-24).
- IV. Sentence passed upon Zedekiah king of Judah (v. 25-27).
- V. The destruction of the Ammonites by the sword foretold (v. 28-32). Thus is this chapter all th 5reatenings.

Ⓢ EZEKIEL 21:1-7

JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was entrusted with, in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it; but, when he complained that the people found fault with him for speaking parables, the word of the Lord came to him again, and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it and so silence that objection. For all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar and every mouth shall be stopped. Note, He that *speaks with tongues* should *pray that he may interpret*, Ⓢ 1 Corinthians 14:13. When we speak to people about their souls we should study plainness, and express ourselves as we may be the best understood. Christ *expounded his parables to his disciples*, Ⓢ Mark 4:34.

1. The prophet is here more plainly directed against whom to level the arrow of this prophecy. He must *drop his word towards the holy places* (v.

2), towards Canaan the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, the temple the holy house. These were highly dignified above other places; but, when they polluted them, that word which used to drop in the holy places shall now drop against them: *Prophecy against the land of Israel*. It was the honour of Israel that it had prophets and prophecy; but these, being despised by them, are turned against them. And justly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which used to be employed against her adversaries, seeing she knew not how to value it.

2. He is instructed, and is to instruct the people, in the meaning of the fire that was threatened to consume the forest of the south: it signified a sword drawn, the sword of war which should make the land desolate (v. 3): *Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel!* There needs no more to make a people miserable than to have God against them; for as, if he be for us, we need not fear, whoever are against us, so, if he be against us, we cannot hope, whoever are for us. And God's professing people, when they revolt from him, set him against them, who used to be for them. Was the fire there of God's kindling? The sword here is his sword, which he has prepared, and which he will give commission to; it is he that will *draw it out of its sheath*, where it had laid quiet and threatened no harm. Note, When the sword is unsheathed among the nations God's hand must be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devour *every green tree and every dry tree*? The sword in like manner shall *cut off the righteous and the wicked*. Good and bad were involved in the common calamities of the nation; the righteous were *cut off from the land of Israel* when they were sent captives in Babylon, though perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatening omen to the land of Israel that in the beginning of its troubles such excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, were cut off from it and conveyed to Babylon. But though the sword *cut off the righteous and the wicked* (for it *devours one as well as another*, ^{<1125>}2 Samuel 11:25), yet far be it from us to think that *the righteous are as the wicked*, ^{<1825>}Genesis 18:25. No; God's graces and comforts make a great difference when his providence seems to make none. The *good figs* are sent into Babylon *for their good*, ^{<2115>}Jeremiah 24:5, 6. It is only in outward appearance that there is *one event to the righteous and to the wicked*, ^{<1912>}Ecclesiastes 9:2. But it speaks the greatness of God's displeasure against the land of Israel. Well might it be said, *His eye shall not spare*, when it shall not spare, no, not the *righteous* in it. Since there are not righteous men sufficient to save the land, to make

the justice of God the more illustrious the few that there are shall suffer with it, and God's mercy shall make it up to them some other way. Did the fire *burn up all faces from the south to the north*? The sword shall go *forth against all flesh from the south to the north*, shall go forth, as God's sword, with a commission that cannot be contested, with a force that cannot be resisted. Were all flesh made to know that God kindled the fire? They shall be made to know that he has *drawn forth the sword*, v. 5. And, *lastly*, Shall the fire that is *kindled never be quenched*? So when this sword of the Lord is drawn against Judah and Jerusalem the scabbard is thrown away, and it shall never be sheathed: *It shall not return any more*, till it has made a full end.

3. The prophet is ordered, by expressions of his own grief and concern for these calamities that were coming on, to try to make impressions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his message he must *sigh* (v. 6), must fetch many deep sighs, *with the breaking of his loins*; he must sign as if his heart would burst, *sigh with bitterness*, with other expressions of bitter sorrow, and this publicly, *in the sight* of those to whom he delivered the foregoing message, that this might be a sermon to their eyes as that was to their ears; and it was well if both would work upon them. The prophet must sign, though it was painful to himself and made his breast sore, and though it is probable that the profane among the people would ridicule him for it and call him a whining canting preacher. But, *if we be beside ourselves it is to God*; and, *if this be to be vile, we will be yet more so*. Note, Ministers, if they would affect others with the things they speak of, must show that they are themselves in the greatest sincerity affected with them, and must submit to that which may create uneasiness to themselves, so that it will promote the ends of their ministry. The people, observing the prophet to sigh so much and seeing no visible occasion for it, would ask, *Wherefore sighest thou*? These sighs have some mystical meaning; let us know what it is." And he must answer them (v. 7): "It is *for the tidings*, the heavy tidings, that we shall hear shortly; the *tidings come* (the judgments come which we hear the tidings of), they come apace, and then you will all sigh; nay, that will not serve. *every heart shall melt* and *every spirit fail*; your courage will all be gone and you will have no animating considerations to support yourselves with. And, when *heart* and *spirit* fail, it will follow of course that *all hands will be feeble* and unable to fight, and all *knees will be weak as water* and unable to flee or to stand their ground." Those who have God for them when flesh and

heart fail have him to be *the strength of their heart*; but those who have God against them have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Belshazzar when *his thoughts troubled him*, ^{<2186>}Daniel 5:6. But some people are worse frightened than hurt; may not the case be so here and the event prove better than likely? No: *Behold it cometh, and shall be brought to pass*. It is not a bugbear that they are frightened with, but *according to the fear so is the wrath*, and more grievous than is feared.

^{<3218>}EZEKIEL 21:8-17

JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

Here is another prophecy of the sword, which is delivered in a very affecting manner; the expressions here used are somewhat intricate, and perplex interpreters. The sword was unsheathed in the foregoing verses; here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament. Observe,

I. How the sword is here described.

1. It is *sharpened*, that it may cut and wound, and make *a sore slaughter*. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and, whatever instruments God shall please to make use of in executing his judgments, he will fill them with strength, courage, and fury, according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a *sharp sword*, ^{<695>}Revelation 19:15.

2. It is *furbished*, that *it may glitter*, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of *flaming sword*. If it have rusted in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightened; for though the glory of God's justice may seem to have been eclipsed for a while, during the day of his patience and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again and be made to glitter.

3. It is a victorious sword, nothing shall stand before it (v. 10): *It contemneth the rod of my son as every tree*. *Israel*, said God once, *is my son, my first-born*. The government of that people was called a *rod*, a *strong rod*; we read (^{<3911>}Ezekiel 19:11) of the *strong rods* they had for *sceptres*. But when the sword of God's justice is drawn it *contemns this*

rod, makes nothing of it; though it be a *strong rod*, and the *rod of his son*, it is no more than *any other tree*. When God's professing people have revolted from him, and are in rebellion against him, his sword *despises* them. What are they to him more than another people? The marginal reading gives another notion of this sword: *It is the rod of my son*; and we know of whom God has said (^{407E}Psalm 2:7), *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, and (v. 9) *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron*. This sword is *that rod of iron* which *contemns every tree* and will bear it down. Or, This sword is *the rod of my son*, a correcting rod, for the chastening of the transgression of God's people (^{407H}2 Samuel 7:14), not to cut them off from being a people. It is a sword to others, a rod to my son.

II. How the sword is here put into the hand of the executioners: "It is *the rod of my Son*, and he has given it that it may be handled (v. 11), that it may be made use of for the end for which it was drawn. *It is given into the hand*, not of the fencer to be played with, but *of the slayer* to do execution with. The sword of war my Son makes use of as a sword of justice, and to him *all judgment is committed*. It is *made bright* (v. 15), *it is wrapped up*, that it may be kept safe, and clean, and sharp *for the slaughter*, not as Goliath's sword was wrapped up in a cloth only for a memorial," (^{407D}1 Samuel 21:9).

III. How the sword is directed, and against whom it is sent (v. 12): *It shall be upon my people*; they shall fall by this sword. It is repeated again, as that which is scarcely credible, that *the sword* of the heathen shall be upon God's own people; nay, it shall be *upon all the princes of Israel*; their dignity and power as princes shall be no more their security than their profession of religion as princes of Israel. But, if the sword be at any time upon God's people, have they not comfort within sufficient to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful? Yes, they have, while they conduct themselves as becomes his people; but these had not done so, and therefore *terrors, by reason of the sword*, shall be upon those that call themselves *my people*. Note, While good men are quiet, not only from evil, but from the fear of it, wicked men are disturbed not only with the sword, but with the terrors of it, arising from a consciousness of their own guilt. This sword is directed particularly *against the great men*, for they had been the greatest sinners among them; they had *altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds* (^{407B}Jeremiah 5:5), and therefore with them in a special manner God's controversy is, who had been the ringleaders in sin.

The *sword of the slain* is the *sword of the great men that are slain*, v. 14. Though they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will *enter into their privy chambers*, and find them out there, as the *frogs*, when they were one of Egypt's plagues, found admission into the *chambers of their kings*. The sword, the *point of this sword*, is directed *against their gates*, against *all their gates* (v. 15), against all those things with which they thought to keep it out and fortify themselves against it. Note, The strongest gates, though they be *gates of brass*, ever so well barred, ever so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God's judgments. But when that is pointed against sinners,

1. They are ready to fear the worst; *their hearts faint*, so that they are not able to make any resistance.
2. The worst comes; whatever resistance they make, it is to no purpose, but they are ruined, and *their ruins are multiplied*. But what need have we to observe the particular directions of this sword when it has a general commission, is sent with a running warrant? (v. 16): "*Go thee, one way or other, which way thou wilt, turn to the right hand or to the left, thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and thou hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore, whithersoever thy face is set, that way do thou proceed, and, like Jonathan's sword, from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty,*" ~~102~~ 2 Samuel 1:22. Note, So full is the world of wicked people that, which way soever God's judgments go forth, they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has of meeting with sinners that the sword of his justice is still as it was at first when it flamed in the hand of the cherubim: it *turns every way*, ~~103~~ Genesis 3:24.

IV. What is the nature of this sword, and what are the intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, v. 13. It is a correction; it is designed to be so; the sword to others is a rod to them. This is a comfortable word which comes in in the midst of these terrible ones, though it be expressed somewhat obscurely.

1. The people of God begin to be afraid that *the sword will contemn even the rod*, that the sword will go on with such fury that it will despise its commission to be a rod only, will forget its bounds and become a sword indeed, even to God's own people. They fear lest the Chaldeans' sword, which is the rod of God's anger, contemn its being called a rod, and become as the *axe that boasts itself against him that heweth therewith or the staff that lifts up itself as if it were no wood*, ²³¹⁶ Isaiah 10:15. Or, "What if the sword contemn even the rod? that is, what if this sword make the former rods, as that of Sennacherib, to be contemned as nothing to this? What if this should prove not a correcting rod, but a destroying sword, to make a full end of our church and nation?" This is that which the thinking, but timorous, few are apprehensive of. Note, When threatening judgments are abroad it is good to suppose the worst that may be the consequences of them, that we may provide accordingly. *What if the sword contemn the tribe or sceptre?* namely, that of Judah and the house of David (so some think *Shebet* here signifies); what if it should aim at the ruin of our government? If it do, *the Lord is righteous and will be gracious* notwithstanding. But,

2. These fears are silenced with an assurance that it is not so; the sword shall not forget itself, nor the errand on which it is sent: *It is a trial*, and it is *no more than a trial*. He that sends it makes what use of it, and sets what bounds to it, he pleases. Here shall its proud waves be stayed. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when his judgments are abroad, and they are ready to tremble for fear of them, that, whatever they are to others, to them they are but trials; and, *when they are tried, they shall come forth as gold*, and the proving of their faith shall be the improving of it.

V. Here the prophet and the people must show themselves affected with these judgments threatened.

1. The prophet must be very serious in denouncing these judgments. He must say, *A sword! a sword!* v. 9. Let him not study for fine words, and a variety of quaint expressions; when the town is on fire people do not so give notice of it, but cry, with a frightful doleful voice, *Fire! fire!* So must the prophet cry, *A sword! a sword!* and (v. 14), *Let the sword be doubled the third time* in thy preaching. God speaks once, yea, twice, yea, thrice; it were well if men, after all, would perceive and regard it. It shall be *doubled the third time* in God's providence; for it was Nebuchadnezzar's

third descent upon Jerusalem that *made a full end* of it. Ruin comes gradually, but at last comes effectually, upon a provoking people. Yet this is not all: the prophet is not only as a herald at arms to proclaim war, and to cry, *A sword! a sword!* once and again, and a third time, but, as a person nearly concerned, he must *cry and howl* (v. 12), must sadly lament the desolations that the sword would make, as one that did himself not only sympathize with the sufferers, but feel from the sufferings. Again (v. 14), *Prophecy, and smite thy hands together, wring thy hands*, as lamenting the desolation, or *clap thy hands*, as by thy prophecy instigating and encouraging those that were to be the instruments of it, or as one standing amazed at the suddenness and severity of the judgment. The prophet must *smite his hands together*; for (says God) *I will also smite my hands together*, v. 17. God is in earnest in pronouncing this sentence upon them, and therefore the prophet must show himself in earnest in publishing it. God's *smiting his hands together*, as well as the prophet's smiting, is in token of a holy indignation at their wickedness, which was really very astonishing. When Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam he *smote his hands together*, ^{<241B>}Numbers 24:10. Note, God and his ministers are justly angry at those who might be saved and yet will be ruined. Some make it an expression of triumph and exultation, agreeing with that (^{<212B>}Isaiah 1:24), *Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries*; and that (^{<312B>}Proverbs 1:26), *I also will laugh at their calamity*. And so it follows here, *I will cause my fury to rest*, not only it shall be perfected, but it shall be pleased. And observe with what solemnity, with what authority, this sentence is ratified: "*I the Lord have said it, who can and will make good what I have said. I have said it, and will never unsay it. I have said it, and who can gainsay it?*"

2. The people must be very serious in the prospect of these judgments. An intimation of this comes in in a parenthesis (v. 10): *Should we then make mirth?* Seeing God has drawn the sword, and the prophet sighs and cries, *Should we then make mirth?* The prophet seems to give this as a reason why he sighs; as ^{<412B>}Nehemiah 2:3, *Why should not my countenance be sad*, when Jerusalem lies waste? Note, Before we allow ourselves to be merry, we ought to consider whether we should be merry or no. Should we make mirth, we who are sentenced to the sword, who lie under the wrath and curse of God? Shall we *make mirth as other people*, who have *gone a whoring from our God?* ^{<311B>}Hosea 9:1. Should we now make mirth, when the hand of God has gone out against us, when God's judgments are abroad in the land and he by them *calls to weeping and mourning?*

Isaiah 22:11, 13. Shall we now make mirth as the king and Haman, when the church is in perplexity (^{Esther 3:15}), when we should be *grieving for the affliction of Joseph?* ^{Amos 6:6}.

EZEKIEL 21:18-27

JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

The prophet, in the verses before, had shown them the sword coming; he here shows them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way.

I. He must see and show the Chaldean army coming against Jerusalem and determined by a supreme power so to do. The prophet must *appoint him two ways*, that is, he must upon a paper draw out two roads (v. 19), as sometimes is done in maps; and he must bring the king of Babylon's army to the place where the roads part, for there they will make a stand. They both *come out of the same land*; but when they come to the place where one road leads to Rabbath, the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jerusalem, he makes a pause; for, though he is resolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack first; here his politics and his politicians leave him at a loss. The sword must go either to Rabbath or *to Judah in Jerusalem*. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken shelter in Jerusalem, and all the interests of the country were bound up in the safety of the city, and therefore it is called *Judah in Jerusalem the defenced*; so strongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, ^{Lamentations 4:12}. The prophet must describe this dilemma that the king of Babylon is at (v. 21); for *the king of Babylon stood* (that is, he shall stand considering what course to take) *at the head of the two ways*. Though he was a prince of great foresight and great resolution, yet, it seems, he knew neither his own interest nor his own mind. Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even those that may do what they will seldom know what to do for the best. Now observe,

1. The method he took to come to a resolution; he *used divination*, applied to a higher and invisible power, perhaps to the determination of Providence by a lot, in order to which he *made his arrows bright*, that

were to be drawn for the lots, in honour of the solemnity. Perhaps *Jerusalem* was written on one arrow and *Rabbath* on the other, and that which was first drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack first. Or he applied to the direction of some pretended oracle: he *consulted with images* or *teraphim*, expecting to receive audible answers from them. Or to the observations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the sacrifices: *he looked in the liver*, whether the position of that portended good or ill luck. Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wise men of the earth that in difficult cases they have been glad to make their court to heaven for direction; as it is an instance of their folly that they have taken such ridiculous ways of doing it, when in cases proper for an appeal to Providence it is sufficient that *the lot be cast into the lap*, with that prayer, *Give a perfect lot*, and a firm belief that the *disposal thereof* is not fortuitous, but *of the Lord*, ¹⁶³Proverbs 16:33.

2. The resolution he was hereby brought to. Even by these sinful practices God served his own purposes and directed him to go to Jerusalem, v. 22. *The divination for Jerusalem* happened to be *at his right hand*, which, according to the rules of divination, determined him *that way*. Note, What services God designs men for he will be sure in his providence to lead them to, though perhaps they themselves are not aware what guidance they are under. Well, Jerusalem being the mark set up, the campaign is presently opened with the siege of that important place. *Captains* are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege, who must *open the mouth in the slaughter*, must give directions to the soldiers what to do and make speeches to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; *battering rams* must be prepared and *forts built*. O what pains, what cost, are men at to destroy one another!

II. He must show both the people and the prince that they bring this destruction upon themselves by their own sin.

1. The people do so, v. 23, 24. They slight the notices that are given them of the judgment coming. Ezekiel's prophecy is to them a *false divination*; they are not moved or awakened to repentance by it. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar by his divination is directed to Jerusalem, and assured of success in that enterprise, they laugh at it and continue *secure*, calling it a *false divination*; because *they have sworn oaths*, that is, they have joined in a solemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the promise

they have made them to *raise the siege*, or upon the assurances which the false prophets have given them that it shall be raised. Or it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated, for which treachery of theirs God had given them up to a judicial blindness, so that the fairest warnings given them were slighted by them as false divinations. Note, It is not strange if those who make a jest of the most sacred oaths can make a jest likewise of the most sacred oracles; for where will a profane mind stop? But shall their unbelief invalidate the counsel of God? Are they safe because they are secure? By no means; nay, the contempt they put upon divine warnings is a sin that brings to remembrance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be now remembered against them.

(1.) Their present wickedness is discovered. Now that God is contending with them so perverse and obstinate are they that whatever they offer in their own defence does but add to their offence; they never conducted themselves so ill as they did now that they had the loudest call given them to repent and reform: “*So that in all your doings your sins do appear. Turn yourselves which way you will, you show a black side.*” This is too true of every one of us; for not only there is *none that lives and sins not*, but *there is not a must man upon earth that does good and sins not*. Our best services have such allays of weakness, and folly, and imperfection, and so much *evil is present with us* even when we *would do good*, that we may say, with sorrow and shame, *In all our doings*, and in all our sayings too, *our sins do appear*, and witness against us, so that if we were under the law we were undone.

(2.) This brings to mind their former wickedness: “*You have made your iniquity to be remembered*, not by yourselves that it might be repented of, but by the justice of God that it might be reckoned for. Your own sins make the sins of your fathers to be remembered against you, which otherwise you should never have smarted for.” Note, God remembers former iniquities against those only who by the present discoveries of their wickedness show that they do not repent of them.

(3.) That they may suffer for all together, they are turned over to the destroyed, that they may be taken (v. 23): “*You shall be taken with the hand* that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you and out of which you cannot escape.” Men are said to be *God's hand* when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, ¹⁹⁷⁴Psalm 17:14. Note, Those

who will not be taken with the word of God's grace shall at last be taken by the hand of his wrath.

2. The prince likewise brings his ruin upon himself. Zedekiah is the *prince of Israel*, to whom the prophet here, in God's name, addresses himself; and, if he had not spoken in God's name, he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for *is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked?*

(1.) He gives him his character, v. 25. Thou profane and *wicked prince of Israel!* He was not so bad as some of his predecessors, and yet bad enough to merit his character. He was himself profane, lost to every thing that is virtuous and sacred. And he was wicked, as he promoted sin among his people; he sinned, and *made Israel to sin*. Note, Profaneness and wickedness are bad in any, but worst of all in a prince, a prince of Israel, who as an Israelite should know better himself, and as a prince should set a better example and have a better influence on those about him.

(2.) He reads him his doom. His iniquity *has an end*; the measure of it is full, and therefore *his day has come*, the day of his punishment, the day of divine vengeance. Note, Though those who are wicked and profane may flourish awhile, yet *their day will come* to fall. The sentence here passed is,

[1.] That Zedekiah shall be deposed. He has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has by his profaneness profaned his crown, and it shall be *cast to the ground* (v. 26): *Remove the diadem*. Crowns and diadems are losable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fades not away, a *kingdom that cannot be moved*. The Chaldee paraphrase expounds it thus: *Take away the diadem from Seraiah the chief priest, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king; neither this nor that shall abide in his place, but shall be removed. This shall not be the same*, not the same that he has been; *this not this* (so the word is); profane and wicked perhaps he is as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness remove their diadem, and take off their crown, and make them the reverse of what they were.

[2.] That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon. Every thing shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in *exalting him that is low* and *abasing him that is high*, preferring some

and degrading others, at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit.

[3.] Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted and come to nothing, Gedaliah's particularly, and Ishmael's who was *of the seed-royal* (to which the Chaldee paraphrase refers this); neither of them shall be able to make any thing of it. *I will overturn, overturn, overturn*, first one project and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down?

[4.] This monarchy shall never be restored till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah. There *shall be no more* kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, *whose right the kingdom is*, who is that seed of David in whom the promise was to have its full accomplishment, and *I will give it to him*. He shall have *the throne of his father David*, ^{<413>}Luke 1:32. Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a failing of the spirit of prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time both as king and prophet might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an incontestable title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church and in the world; the kingdom is his right. And, having the right, he shall in due time have the possession: *I will give it to him*; and there shall be a general overturning of all rather than he shall come short of his right, and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way to make room for him, ^{<725>}Daniel 2:45; ^{<415>}1 Corinthians 15:25. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared that the promise made in David would fail for evermore. “No,” says God, “that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever.”

~~<372>~~ EZEKIEL 21:28-32

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AMMONITES

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Babylon's diverting his design against Rabbath, when he turned it upon Jerusalem. Upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem; but the prophet must let them know that forbearance is no acquittance; the

reprieve is not a pardon; their day also is at hand; their turn comes next, and it will be but a poor satisfaction to them that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed.

I. The sin of the Ammonites is here intimated; it is *their reproach*, v. 28.

1. The reproach they put upon themselves when they hearkened to their false prophets (for such it seems there were among them as well as among the Jews), who pretended to foretel their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them: “They *see vanity unto thee and divine a lie*, v. 29. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and thou art such a fool as to suffer thyself to be imposed upon by them and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them.” Note, Those that feed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity.

2. The reproach they put upon the Israel of God, when they triumphed in their afflictions, and thereby added affliction to them, which was very barbarous and inhuman. Their divines, by puffing them up with a conceit that they were a better people than Israel, being spared when they were cut off, and with a confidence that their prosperity should always continue, made them so very haughty and insolent that they did even *tread on the necks of the Israelites that were slain, slain by the wicked Chaldeans*, who had commission to execute God's judgments upon them when their *iniquity had an end*, that is, when the measure of it was full. We shall meet with this again, ²³⁸Ezekiel 25:3, etc. Note, Those are ripening apace for misery who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when *judgment begins at the house of God*.

II. The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatened. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, ²³⁹Psalm 79:12. Let us see how terrible the threatening is and the destruction will be.

1. It shall come *from the wrath of God*, who resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself (v. 31): *I will pour out my indignation* as a shower of fire and brimstone *upon thee*. The least drop of divine *indignation and wrath* will create *tribulation and anguish* enough to the *soul of man that does evil*; what then would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? “*I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath*; that is, I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee; it shall

burn with the utmost vehemence.” *Thou shalt be for fuel to this fire*, v. 32. Note, Wicked men make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath; they are consumed by it, and it is inflamed by them.

2. It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry, as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow: *The sword, the sword is drawn* (v. 28, compare v. 9, 10); it is drawn *to consume because of the glittering*, because it is brandished and glitters, and is fit to be made use of. God's executions will answer his preparations. This sword, when it is drawn, *shall not return into its sheath* (v. 30) till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn it does not return till *God causes it to return, and he is in one mind and who can turn him?* Who can change his purpose? **3.** The persons employed in it are *brutish men, and skilful to destroy*. Men of such a bad character as this, who have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts — human reason, which makes them skilful, but no human compassion, which makes them skilful only to destroy — though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes are made use of to serve God's purposes. God *delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such*, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's Israel. We have reason to pray, as Paul desired to be prayed for, that we may be *delivered from wicked and unreasonable men* (^{STR}2 Thessalonians 3:2), men that seem made for doing mischief.

4. The place where they should thus be reckoned with: *“I will judge thee where thou wast created*, where thou wast first formed into a people, and where thou hast been settled ever since, and therefore where thou seemest to have taken root; *the land of thy nativity* shall be the land of thy destruction.” Note, God can bring ruin upon us even where we are most secure, and turn us out of that land which we thought we had a title to not to be disputed and a possession of not to be disturbed. *Thy blood shall be shed* not only in thy borders, but *in the midst of thy land*. Lastly, I shall be an irreparable ruin: “Though thou mayest think to recover thyself, it is in vain to think of it; thou *shalt be no more remembered* with any respect,” ^{STR}Psalm 9:6. Justly is their name blotted out who would have Israel's name for ever lost.