

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious

Part XXV: Parable Of The Sharpened Sword: The High Cost Of Not Revering God In Past Discipline (Ezekiel 21:8-17)

I. Introduction

- A. If God signals that we have sinned and He administers a moderate level of discipline upon us, our proper response is to revere Him enough that we **immediately** repent and turn from our sin. Failure to respect the Lord enough to respond this way only leads to His increasing the level of pain in following discipline events!
- B. This lesson is taught in the Parable of the Sharpened Sword in Ezekiel 21:8-17, and we view it for our insight:

II. Parable Of The Sharpened Sword: The High Cost Of Not Revering God In Past Discipline, Ez. 21:8-17.

- A. After giving the parable of a drawn sword in Ezekiel 21:1-7, God had Ezekiel give a parable of a sharpened, polished sword, the emphasis being on the **heightened damage** to be wrought by **this** sword, Ez. 21:8-9 ESV.
- B. To understand God's reason for this second parable of a sharpened, polished sword, we note that it is given in the form of a poetic song of three stanzas that are separated by two prose interludes in both the Hebrew text (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 842-843) and the New International Version (as follows):
 - 1. Verses 8-10a comprise the first poetic stanza, verses 11-12 the second poetic stanza and verses 14-17 the third poetic stanza of the song, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1267.
 - 2. However, these poetic stanzas are separated by two interludes of prose, the first interlude being verse 10b that comes between stanzas one and two, and the second interlude being verse 13 that comes between stanzas two and three, with both of the interludes "focusing on 'the rod,'" Ibid.
 - 3. These prose interludes are difficult to interpret (Ibid.), with the Massoretic text reading "the staff of my son scorns all wood" in v. 10b and "staff that scorns" in v. 13. (A. R. Hulst, O. T. Translation Problems, 1960, p. 201) Yet, since a rod was often used for discipline (Prov. 10:13; 13:24; 23:13), and "God used 'the rod' to discipline His own (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Job 9:34; 21:9)," the party being disciplined in the context is Israel and her king for not repenting with God's past uses of His "rod" because they had scorned it in a lack of reverence for God, a very serious form of wickedness. (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T.)
- C. Thus, "Israel had despised God's earlier attempts to use a rod to correct her, so He now used the sword," one that was sharpened and polished to wield heightened destruction, Ibid. Failure to heed God's relatively modest past disciplines out of disrespect for God had led to His use of the lethal sword to devour and slay His people.
- D. Accordingly, the first stanza of the song, the shortest one, told of the sharpening and polishing of God's sword, His honing it for use to administer effective destruction, Ezekiel 21:8-10a.
- E. The second stanza, longer than the first, told of this sharpened, polished sword being grasped in the hand of the slayer so that Ezekiel was to cry out because it would be used against the people of Israel, against all the princes of the nation, and Ezekiel was to beat his breast in grief, Ezekiel 21:11-12.
- F. The third stanza, the longest one of the song, told of Ezekiel's being instructed of God to strike his hands together, signifying the striking of the sword two or three times to produce a great slaughter from all directions, Ezekiel 21:14. So that hearts might melt in terror as many people fell by the sword, God said He had stationed the sword at all the city gates to flash like lightning, grasped for slaughter, turning in every direction until God's wrath was totally expended against Israel's sin, Ezekiel 21:15-17a. The Lord added that He had spoken this prophetic song, that it would surely be fulfilled, Ezekiel 21:17b.

Lesson: *By use of two prose interludes between increasing lengths of three poetic stanzas in a song of the sharpened, polished sword, God taught that His punishment of Israel by way of an overwhelmingly lethal, grief-inducing sword would surely come due to Israel's past disrespect for God's former, modest disciplinary efforts to get her to repent and depart from her sin.*

Application: *(1) If God ever disciplines us for sin, we need to revere Him enough that we quickly confess our sin to Him lest we face His enhanced, repeat discipline that eventually will shock us, leaving us grief-stricken. (2) May we learn the lesson that God has absolute authority over each of us, that we are totally vulnerable to Him in every way that we respect Him as Almighty God so as to obey Him at all times for our good! (3) Since Israel's kings had despised God's "rod" of discipline, but that rod was still leveled at them, we must realize that we are never too lofty in our role in this life to be able to avoid God's most severe forms of discipline, that we of necessity must always remain God's humble subjects and always repent as needed!*