

“Jerusalem Fall: The Missing Man in the Gap”

Ezekiel 21–24

Dr. Frank M. Barker, Jr.

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We’ll start by looking at Ezekiel 22:30–31 where God says, [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.*”

Ezekiel who wrote this, is in prison in Babylon. In his day, Israel kept rebelling against God. God brought against them Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and conquered the nation. They set up a puppet king. They put the king in Babylon in prison but the puppet king kept rebelling and all of this is God’s judgment on the nation. Now God is really going to deal with them and destroy Jerusalem and the nation. Here is His warning and word about that through Ezekiel. Let’s look now in Ezekiel 21.

Notice the song of the sword He has Ezekiel perform to the captives at Jerusalem who are from Israel, there in Babylon with him. Ezekiel 21:1–4 says [1] *The word of the LORD came to me: [2] “Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem (which is 700 miles away) 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 from its sheath and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked. [4] 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.*

Then you find in Ezekiel 21:6–7, [6] *“As for you, son of man, groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan before their eyes. [7] And when they say to you, ‘Why do you groan?’ 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.* This is news that will come to the prisoners of what is happening 700 miles away.

Ezekiel 21:11 says [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.* Then God is applauding at this. Ezekiel 21:17 says [17] *I also will clap my hands, and I will satisfy my fury; I the LORD have spoken.”* God was very upset at the nation of Israel for their ongoing sin, rebellion and so on. Now the nation is going to be wiped out and would later be rebuilt after 70 years of captivity but God is clapping His hands in sense at all of this as He punishes them for their continued rebellion against Him.

Also He predicts what is taking place right now as Nebuchadnezzar is in route to wipe out the city but he comes to a fork in the road. He could go against the Ammonites who are also his opponents and destroy their city or he could go against Jerusalem and destroy Israel’s capital city. He is trying to decide which way to go so he uses divination to help him decide. He takes two arrows and on one he writes ‘Jerusalem’ and on the other he writes the Ammonite city. He puts them back in the sheath, shakes them and he is going to pull one out.

Ezekiel 21:19–22 says [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. [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.

Jerusalem is the one that gets picked and he will conquer it and destroy it. Here is Nebuchadnezzar doing this but God is controlling all this with him not knowing this. God has ordained which of those arrows he would draw out. So there is the song of the sword and now there is the removal of the crown.

Ezekiel 21:26–27 says [26] *thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. [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.* Remove the crown which means they are not going to have a king now. This is about 586 BC and they won't have a king until He comes to whom judgment belongs and that is talking about Jesus. His crown won't be of an earthly kingdom but it will be of a spiritual Kingdom but here they are almost 500 plus years that they won't have a king. This is what took place and being predicted here, the overthrow of the kingly line.

Then there are the charges against the city. We see that God is doing this because of their sin. The instruction is to show Jerusalem its sin. Ezekiel 22:1–2 says [1] *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.* Then there is the detailing of the sins. There is idolatry. Ezekiel 22:4 says [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. Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries.*

There is oppression by the leaders. Ezekiel 22:6–8 says [6] *“Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood.* (There is rebelling of the children) [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.* God details all these things that the nation of Israel has done wrong.

There is a whole list of things they are doing including adultery. Ezekiel 22:11–13 says [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 you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD. [13] “Behold, I strike my hand at the dishonest gain that you have made, and at the blood that has been in your midst.*

If you were to think of our day to make a list, where would you start and what would you list that we are doing? There is a book written by David Platt who was the pastor of the Church at Brookhills and is now head of the Southern Baptist World Missions Ministry, about the default of our culture and how bad it is. The title of the book is Counter Culture: A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Abortion, Persecution, Orphans and Pornography. It's about the counter culture to change back from where we are.

In the book he talks about the terrible matter of abortion. Think about the baby that gets killed in the womb. He writes in his book, “Consider the way the Bible describes the relationship between God and the unborn baby. The Psalmist writes to God,

[13] For you formed my inward parts;

you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

[14] I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;

my soul knows it very well.

[15] My frame was not hidden from you,

when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

[16] Your eyes saw my unformed substance;

in your book were written, every one of them,

the days that were formed for me,

when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:13–16)”

This is about the matter of abortion, what a terrible thing! How many children have been killed since the Roe v Wade decision of the court? It is something like 50 million.

I have another book titled We Cannot Be Silent; by Al Mohler. He is a great theologian who is the head of the Southern Baptist Seminary. His subtitle says, Speaking Truth to a Culture, redefining sex, marriage & the very meaning of right & wrong, and that is what our culture is doing; redefining all of this. He says “The revolution that is centered on transforming sexual morality and redefining marriage has succeed faster than its most eager advocates had even imagined, as they themselves now admit. But this revolution could not have achieved such a velocity if the ground had not been cleared by developments that came long before same-sex marriages.”

Then Mohler talks about what came before and all. He goes on to say “We are living in the midst of a revolution. The Christian Church in the West now faces a set of challenges that exceeds anything it has experienced in the past. The revolution that has transformed most of Western Europe and much of North America is a revolution more subtle and more dangerous than revolutions faced in previous generations. This is a revolution of ideas – one that is transforming the entire moral structure of meaning and life that human beings have recognized for millennia.

Mohler talks about this big change that is taking place. He says “Nevertheless, the same mechanisms of thought control and conformity are affecting far more Americans as they enter our nation’s colleges and universities. On today’s average state university campus, as well as in elite private institutions, freshmen are required to sit through hours of sensitivity training and moral indoctrination on the new morality of campus sex codes. In almost every case this indoctrination involves instruction on the only acceptable way of thinking and speaking about the LGBT community and other sexual minorities.”

This is total change of morals from our history. We are in the wrong direction now. Mohler says “This Tsunami-like moral revolution is reshaping our culture right before our eyes.” It is this huge change in the wrong direction. The song of the sword was against Judah for all of that. The song of the sword – where is it in reference to our nation here? They had forgotten God as a big charge that is made in the Scripture here in Ezekiel.

Now notice the search for a man among them who would stand in the gap. Ezekiel 22:30 says *[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. What kind of man are we talking about here? I think there is a picture of this man in Psalm 106.

This passage in Psalm 106 is talking about when Moses led the people out of Egypt, going to the Promised Land and the people kept rebelling against God. They had Moses' brother, Aaron, create a golden idol that they could worship in the land here that they could see. God was very offended about that and He tells Moses that He is going to wipe them out and start a new nation with him, Moses. Moses tells God not to do that because that would hurt God's reputation. Moses said that others would say God brought them out to this land just to wipe them out and that's not the kind of God You are. Moses pleads with God not to wipe out the people. Moses even tells God that if He does that then to block him out too. God tells Moses that He won't wipe them out, since you interceded with Me like that. Moses did everything he could to reform the people. He dealt with that golden calf and everything else he could do, which was exactly the thing to do.

Psalm 106:19–23 says [19] *They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image.* [20] *They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass.* [21] *They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt,* [22] *wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.* [23] *Therefore he said he would destroy them— had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them.* Here Moses stood in that gap and pleaded with God and God didn't wipe them out.

Matthew Henry comments on this and says 'notice sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people at which good things run out from them and evil things pour in among them, a gap by which God enters to destroy them. There is a way of standing in the gap and making up the breach against the judgments of God by repentance, prayer and reformation. When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them He expects some to intercede for them and inquires if there be but one that does so much as His desire and delight to show mercy.'" Like Abraham did for Sodom when Lot and his family were living in Sodom, as he pleaded with God not to destroy Sodom if there be 50 righteous men, 40, 30, and then 10 but there weren't. God did rescue Lot and his family out of it but He destroyed Sodom. We want to stand in the gap.

We see what kind of gap man He is talking about and we think of men like Abraham and Moses. I think of another man in the Bible named Phineas. Phineas was the grandson of Aaron. He was displeased with the immorality with which the Moabites and Midianites had successfully tempted the Israelites (Numbers 25:1–9) to inter-marry and to worship Baal-peor, so he personally executed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman while they were together in the man's tent, running a javelin or spear through the man and the belly of the woman. His action brought an end to a plague said to have been sent by God to punish the Israelites for sexually intermingling with the Midianites.

There was a man named Telemachus who lived in the 4th century AD. He was a monk. He had a feeling God wanted him to go to Rome. He was an Asian hermit in a remote village. Setting out on foot he obeyed God and headed to Rome. A week later he arrives at the city at the time of a great festival. He followed this big crowd that was surging down the street toward the Coliseum. He saw the gladiators standing before the Emperor in the Coliseum, saying 'we who are about to die salute you O Emperor.' He realized these men were going to fight to the death for the entertainment of the crowd. Telemachus cries out 'In the name of Christ, stop!' Nobody paid any attention and as the games begin he pushed his way through the crowd and climbed over the wall into the arena. When the crowd saw this tiny figure rushing to the gladiators

shouting ‘in the name of Christ, stop’ they started laughing and thought it was part of the event. Then they realized that it wasn’t and the laughter turned to anger. One of the gladiators plunged his sword into Telemachus and Telemachus fell to the ground and died and his last words were ‘in the name of Christ, stop!’ Then a strange thing happened.

As the gladiators stood there looking at the tiny figure and hush fell over the Coliseum. Way up in the upper rows a man stood up and made his way out, and then another and then another. The whole crowd eventually left one after another. That was in 391 AD and that was the last battle to the death for gladiators in the Roman Coliseum. Never again in that great stadium did men kill each other for the entertainment of the crowd. It was all because of one tiny voice there – in the name of Christ, stop! There is one of the gap men. We need gap men and women.

We have gap men in our day. I think of James Dobson in our day who has been a tremendous gap man. When I think of the Roe v Wade decision that said abortion was okay I preached a sermon about that several Sundays later and a young man in the congregation who was involved in construction work said to me ‘I have to do something about that’ referring to the killing of babies. He did. He started Sav-A-Life and that was Wales Goble. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved all over the world as a result of a gap man, like Wales Goble. I think of others in our congregation like Gary Palmer who is a gap man. We have had gap men and women here and in our nation, our city and our church. We want to be gap men and women. It is crucial. God is looking for people who will stand in the gap with the sword swinging now toward our nation. Our nation is going in the wrong direction that we’ve got to be standing in the gap.

Ezekiel 22:30–31 says [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.*” The good news is that God is looking for gap men and women. He desires to find such and we need to respond to such.

Notice the death of Ezekiel’s wife here in Ezekiel 24. Ezekiel 24:1–4, 6 says [1] *In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: [2] “Son of man, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. [3] And utter a parable to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: “Set on the pot, set it on; pour in water also; [4] put in it the pieces of meat, all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder; fill it with choice bones.*

[6] *“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose corrosion is in it, and whose corrosion has not gone out of it! Take out of it piece after piece, without making any choice.* The pot boiling is representative of the city that was going to be destroyed.

Ezekiel 24:15–22 says [15] *The word of the LORD came to me: [16] “Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. [17] Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.” [18] So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.*

[19] *And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?” [20] Then I said to them, “The word of the LORD came to me:*

[21] *'Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul, and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. [22] And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.* Jerusalem and the delight of their eyes will be destroyed right now.

Why not weep and mourn over it? We don't know. Maybe it was if the Babylonians saw them in captivity mourning and weeping over what had happened there they would crush them out. So maybe that's why God didn't want them to weep but God sends very painful things into our lives and we can handle it by His power as Ezekiel handled it but we have to be dealing with wrong in our nation and whatever our situation is. We have to be gap men and gap women and stand up. It's so encouraging that God is looking for such people and will use such people for His glory.

You might think but 'look how God took Ezekiel's child' but look how God gave His own Son to die for sinners like us so we could be forgiven, be empowered and we can change things. He loves us and we can trust Him when things go very wrong, we know He loves us, is with us and we can take a strong stand in whatever it may be. We can stand against the wrong of our culture. Maybe God has put some very hard things on you and He can use those hard things to help you get to know Him better and grow spiritually – even nationally, the song of the sword. We have to be working in every way we can to change the situation, to be gap men and women, to pray, to stand up against the wrong issues in our culture as we see these terrible things that are happening. Stand up and proclaim the truth of God.

If you're not a Christian there is an awful gap in your defense before God. Jesus stood in that gap and took the punishment due you for your sin. If you put your trust in Him and surrender your will to Him, you'll be united to Him and whatever painful things come in your life, none the less, you're with Him and He's with you and one day you'll go to be with Him. That is crucial. We want to be gap men and women and we want to remove any gap between us and God. Let us pray.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank You so much for this passage and the warning of it for our nation. Lord, we take it. We don't want to see the desire of our eyes removed but Father we that we would stand in the midst here and seek to bring about reformation, that we would unite our hearts in prayer before You. Father, we would pray for any reading this who have never really surrendered their will to Christ or put their trust in Him as their approach to You, that they would do so even right now and we pray this in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Power Point

I. THE SONG OF THE SWORD (ch. 21:1–22)

- A. The Unsheathing of God's Sword (vv. 12–17)
- B. The Predicting of Nebuchadnezzar's Divination (vv. 19–22)

II. THE REMOVAL OF THE CROWN (ch. 21:26, 27)

- A. The Removal of the Crown (v. 26)
- B. The Remaining without a King (v. 27a)
- C. The Restoration to the "One Who Will Come" (v. 27b)

III. THE CHARGES AGAINST THE CITY (ch. 22:1–28)

- A. The Instruction to Show Jerusalem Its Sins (vv. 1, 2)
- B. The Details of the Sins (vv. 4–26)

IV. THE SEARCH FOR A MAN (ch. 22:30–31)

- A. The Search (v. 30a)
- B. The Failure (v. 30b)
- C. The Consequences (v. 31)

V. THE DEATH OF EZEKIEL'S WIFE (ch. 24)

- A. The Seething Pot (vv. 1–11)
- B. The Desire of Ezekiel's Eyes (vv. 15–26)
- C. The Revelation of God (v. 27)

Conclusion