

**Pastor Paul Bawden  
Grace Evangelical Church  
Sunday, July 18, 2010  
"Glory In The Sword"  
Ezekiel 21**

A minister was given a parking ticket. In police court, the judge asked if he had anything to say.

"Yes," replied the minister. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."

The judge fined him \$50 and admonished him, "Go thou and sin no more."

We would say figuratively here that the judge used the sword. Judgment was brought in spite of the appeal for mercy.

As we come to our text today in Ezekiel, as we continue exploring the Book of Ezekiel on Sunday mornings, we find that God has a message for His people in Ezekiel's day regarding the sword. In fact, it is a message to the people of Israel who are still living in Jerusalem, although it is for those who are living in Babylonian captivity with him as well around 590 B.C. In addition, there is also a message for us in Ezekiel 21.

**What's God saying, then, through Ezekiel, to His people Israel and to us today?**

**I. God says, "I'm very much aware of what's taking place in the country and in your lives" (Ezekiel 21:1-2).**

Note the text, "And the word of the LORD came to me saying, 'Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and speak against the sanctuaries and prophesy against the land of Israel.'"

**1. In Ezekiel's day.**

God is telling Ezekiel that He knows what is happening back in Jerusalem and the land of Israel. Even though Ezekiel is in Babylon many miles away from his homeland, the situation there is not good at all. In fact, there is the desecration of the temple with idolatry. Immorality is rampant, and people have rejected God's truth.

Just read Ezekiel 22:1-12, the next chapter. There was bloodshed/idolatry, (3-4), indecency (7), despised God's person (8), immorality (10-11), an extortion (12).

**God is telling Ezekiel and us today, that nothing escapes His omniscience and omnipresence.**

I read this verse in my quiet time this week from II Chronicles 16:9. There the prophet, Hanani, is speaking God's word to Asa, who was a good king, but had made an alliance with Ben-hadad, king of Aram rather than relying on the Lord.

Here's what the LORD told Asa:

**"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."**

Then the LORD added, **"You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."**

**Asa forgot, as those in Jerusalem in Ezekiel's day had forgotten, that God sees all that one does at all times.**

God neither slumbers nor sleeps penned the Psalmist in Psalm 121.

**Psalm 139 concurs, "You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways . . . . Where can I go from Your Spirit?"** And of course the answer is "nowhere, God, You are present everywhere at the same time."

**The nation of Israel in Jerusalem in Ezekiel's day needed to be shaken up to the reality that God was not asleep in heaven. He knew exactly what the people were doing. He knew all about their rebellion and disobedience to HIM.**

**God was fully aware of what was going on in the country of Israel and in the city of Jerusalem. As well, God knew exactly what was going on in the minds and hearts of the people in the homeland in addition to knowing what was transpiring in the lives people of Israel in Babylonian Captivity.**

## **2. Our day.**

**The biblical God is still the same today, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).**

God knows what is going on in Washington D. C. regarding our President, his Cabinet, the Congress, and the Supreme Court. He knows what is happening regarding our country's economy. He knows what is happening in the Gulf of Mexico. The biblical God knows what is happening in Arizona regarding the immigration situation. God knows what is happening in our country spiritually, and how his name is being desecrated in certain circumstances.

The biblical God also knows what is happening with Israel in the Middle East. He knows what is happening in Iran as the country seeks to develop a nuclear bomb. God knows what is happening in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**The biblical God's eyes run to and fro throughout the earth – God sees all that is happening in our world – all at the same time. Nothing gets by HIM.**

**Which means as God knows what is happening in our world, He also knows what is happening in our individual lives, our family lives, our church life, at our work, our neighborhoods, and at school when in session.**

**Hear the Psalmist again,**

**"Even before there is a word on my tongue, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me" (Psalm 139:4-5).**

**Amazing, God knows what is going on in our minds at all times.**

**What is God looking for when His eyes go to and fro throughout the earth?**

**II. God says, "I'm looking for those who have given their lives to me so I can support them" (II Chronicles 16:9).**

**The rest of II Chronicles 16:9 reads: "That He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."**

**God looks for those who have placed their faith in Him who are living in a relationship with Him with undivided hearts. Those who have that kind of heart He is supporting – He gets behind them, He becomes involved in their lives, so that they can glorify HIM.**

### **1. In Ezekiel's day.**

As God looked over Israel still in the homeland, and over the city of Jerusalem, He didn't find much faith. There were a few there who followed the Lord (Ezekiel 21:4), but the circumstance was very grim even for those who followed the Lord.

**Ezekiel 21:24 reads, "Because you have made your iniquity 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 will be sized with the hand."**

The people in Israel even believed that information about the king of Babylon coming to take them captive was false (Ezekiel 21:23).

**As God looked over Jerusalem in Ezekiel's day, he found very few whose hearts were completely HIS. He found very few who really loved the Lord and served Him wholeheartedly.**

**In fact, Ezekiel was told to groan with a breaking heart and bitter grief in the sight of the people in Babylonian captivity, indicating the grief ahead for Israel because of their sin against the Lord (Ezekiel 21:5).**

**It could also portray the heart of God in His grief over the sin of Israel. As God told Israel through Ezekiel in 18:23 –"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."**

**That's why Christ wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41) as He knew what was coming upon the city for rejecting Him – and in A.D. 70, Titus ransacked the city.**

**God weeps over His people who reject Him.**

### **2. In our day.**

**As the LORD's eyes roam to and fro through this beloved country of ours what does He see?**

In the public arena, He sees that He is not acknowledged as the Creator. Evolution is the basis of man's existence. The creature, man, is the one who is supreme and the final answer. He who is finite thinks that he is infinite. How foolish.

As the biblical God looks through our country, He sees that the institution of marriage between a man and a woman is being challenged and in some instances changed. One judge decided to do away with the Defense of Marriage Act, which states that marriage is between a man and a woman.

Looking through our country, the Lord sees lawlessness, and immorality, idolatry, and a lot of religiosity where what one believes is determined by one's own reason, which means that what an individual believes is just as good as what someone else believes. It has been called a hot tub religion.

The Lord sees in our country a lack of what is true justice and the breaking down of some of our judges upholding the law of the land.

Overall, God sees that our country is moving away from its Judeo/Christian roots. The popular pressure through the media and other forces is to keep moving in the direction.

Certainly, our LORD must be saddened, perhaps He weeps over this country, as He watches the developments in the United States of America away from Him and His biblical principles, and the idea that government is able to provide for all of our needs.

How sad it must be for our God, that in the public arena the biblical God is no longer acknowledged as the source of our blessings, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ is demeaned and rejected.

**Thanks be to God, though, that all is not lost in our great land.**

**As God sees the spiritual mess in our country, He also sees those whose hearts are HIS.**

**For individually, God still finds those who know His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ personally.**

There are many in public office today whose heart is completely the LORD's. There are Bible studies among our leaders in Washington D.C. Some running for office in November give evidence of their faith in Jesus Christ.

God still knows that there are those like you whose heart is completely the Lord's. There are many believers in the Lord in this city who attend other churches that uphold the Bible as true and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are many in our country who you haven't bowed their knee to Baal.

**In fact a recent Barna Group Survey shows that three out of every five unchurched people in America are self-described Christians. A majority of these self-identified, unchurched Christians hold a biblical view of God. The survey found that 68% of these Christians believe that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the universe and that he still rules the universe today.**

**Furthermore, a much smaller but still significant number (35%) believe the Bible is totally accurate in all the principles it teaches. The survey suggests, based on past studies, that nearly four in ten unchurched Americans (37%) avoid attending church services because of painful past experiences with the church or people in the church.**

**According to Barna, one in five Americans (18 percent) can be considered what he called "born again" Christians – those who say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today, and believe that they will have eternal life through confessing their sins and acknowledging Jesus Christ as their Savior.**

**Overall, the survey found that 28% of the U.S. adult population is unchurched, or nearly 65 million people. When the number of children living with unchurched adults is also included, the number rises to 100 million.**

**Praise be to God that HE can still find in this great land those whose hearts are completely HIS. He is supporting each one. At the same time, there is much work for us to do in reaching out to those still needing to experience the Savior's love.**

And through prayer for our country and leaders, and through the followers of Christ faithfulness in voting for righteousness and truth, God may bring a spiritual awakening in our land to turn us back to the biblical God and His principles for governing.

**Through Ezekiel,**

**I. God says, "I'm very much aware of what's taking place in the country and in your lives" (Ezekiel 21:1-2).**

**II. God says, "I'm looking for those who have given their lives to me so I can support them" (II Chronicles 16:9).**

**Thirdly, God is saying something else to Israel and to us.**

**III. God says, "My mercy is extended only so long" (Ezekiel 21:3-26, 28-32).**

**1. In Ezekiel's day.**

This entire section is devoted to the reality that God's mercy can only be extended so long.

**What does God say in Ezekiel 21:3-5?**

**"Behold, I am against you; and I shall draw my sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked. Because I shall cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore My sword shall go forth from its sheath against all flesh from south to north. Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath. It will not return to its sheath again."**

**The righteous will be taken with the wicked.**

**In Ezekiel 21:8-13,** God uses Ezekiel to keep talking about the sword that is coming upon His people in Jerusalem and his homeland.

**"A sword, a sword sharpened and also polished! Sharpened to make a slaughter, polished to flash like lightning" (Ezekiel 21:9-10).**

**Then Ezekiel 21:12 –**

**"Cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against My people, it is against all the official of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with My people, therefore strike the thigh (indicating a sign of despair)."**

**The prophet continues telling Israel about God's sword that is coming upon Jerusalem and his homeland.**

**The sword will appease God's wrath (Ezekiel 21:17). Which means His justice will be satisfied for the disobedience of Israel, their rejection of Him when His judgment comes.**

Ezekiel puts the nail in the coffin of God's judgment when he says in **Ezekiel 23:35,**

**"Because you have forgotten and cast me behind your back, bear now the punishment of your lewdness and your harlotries" and adds, "You will not be cleansed from your filthiness again until I have spent My wrath on you." (Ezekiel 24:13).**

**The bottom line from Ezekiel to Israel still in Jerusalem and the homeland is that:**

**"GOD'S MERCY IS EXTENDED ONLY SO LONG."**

## 2. In our day.

Obviously, God is still extending His mercy to our country and to all who live in this country, the righteous - those who know the Lord personally and the unrighteous – those who reject Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

**Yes, God is in the mercy business today,** extending His love and grace to the entire world through believers in different countries and through missionaries who take the gospel to different parts of the globe.

God told Israel that he didn't delight in the death of the wicked, wanting people to turn to HIM.

So to us today, God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). God is desirous that people come to know Jesus Christ personally, and He wants to use us who know the Lord to be a witness for HIM.

God is extending His mercy to us today, but His mercy will only be extended so long.

Which means that there is another word that God has for His people Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as well as for us today.

**IV. God says "My judgment to Israel has come, and my judgment upon the world will come in My time" (Ezekiel 21:19-26).**

### 1. Ezekiel's day.

The judgment on Israel was pictured in this sword that Ezekiel keeps describing.

Who was the sword Ezekiel was talking about?

**Ezekiel 21:19 gives us the answer.**

It would be the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, who would deal with Rabbah or Philadelphia, and with Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar would use divination to determine which city to attack first. Still the people who had allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar would believe that the divination was false since they believed that an attack on Jerusalem was impossible. Nebuchadnezzar would come to Jerusalem and capture the city and the prince of Israel, the king who was Zedekiah at this time.

Nebuchadnezzar's attack came in 586 B.C., not far from the time of Ezekiel's prophecy. The rest of the people in Jerusalem would be taken captive to Babylon.

**Habakkuk in his prophecy had a question to God about using an unrighteous nation, like Babylon, to judge and discipline His chosen people. But God reminded Habakkuk of His loving sovereignty, and the just shall live by faith. God would eventually judge unrighteous Babylon.**

God's judgment came upon Jerusalem and the land of Israel in 586 B.C. His invitation to repentance came to an end. Jerusalem was captured and the people were taken into Babylonian captivity.

God, though, wasn't through with Israel, as they would return from captivity in 536 B.C. under Cyrus, and Israel in part of its promised land today, still has a future as other Scriptures indicate.

But at this time in Israel's history, God's mercy had ended for His people in Jerusalem and the land of Israel. His judgment must come for their gross idolatry and immorality.

## **2. In our day.**

**How about us today? Is God's mercy ending for us in this country and the world.**

Only God knows His timetable for such to happen, but we do know from the Book of Daniel that it appears that after the rapture of the church, there is a shift of power to the revived Roman Empire, and the Scripture is not clear where the United States fits into this scenario. But one can see how that can happen if this country loses its significance in the world economically. There is certainly talk in our world about a one world government, which the US could be part of.

**Will God's mercy end for America? Certainly, as we have mentioned the sins of Israel in Ezekiel's day are present in our day. America is turning her back on God, and as some have said, we live in a post-Christian era.**

**Unless there is a return to God, a humbling before Him, as II Chronicles 7:14 tells us, God's day of mercy will end for this beloved country in His time.**

**Yes, (1) God was aware of what was happening in Israel and is aware of what is happening in our country and the world.**

**(2) He is looking for those whose hearts are completely HIS.**

**(3) God's mercy will come to an end, (4) and His judgment will come in His time.**

**But in the midst of judgment God again, as in Ezekiel 17 and 20, God offers His hope to His people and the world. Note what God's final message in this chapter is to Israel.**

**V. God says, "I will provide my Messiah and Savior so Israel can have a true king, and all can have eternal salvation in Him and deliverance from eternal judgment" (Ezekiel 21:27).**

**Ezekiel 21:27 reads:**

**"A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I shall make it. This also will be no more (meaning there will be no more king) until He comes whose right it is, and I shall give it to Him."**

Zedekiah the king would be captured by Nebuchadnezzar. His eyes would be put out as he was brought to Babylon. The turban or diadem of the priest was to be removed and the crown of the king would be removed (Ezekiel 21:26).

Thusly, the priest and the king were to be removed from Jerusalem.

After the restoration of Israel to her land in 536 B.C. the king was not restored, and only the priesthood partially – the ark of the covenant and the shekinah glory would be no more.

**Who is the He here? None other than the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.**

## **1. In Ezekiel's day.**

**This was an amazing prophesy of Christ given (right in the midst of God's judgment), some 600 years before His birth in Bethlehem.**

**He would be a king when He came into the world. Isaiah put it this way:**

**"For unto us a child is born, a son will be given to us (He was always the eternal Son of God), and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore (Isaiah 9:6-7).**

**He would be Savior when He came into the world.**

**Isaiah also told us that He would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities . . . The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on HIM" (Isaiah 53:5-6).**

**As told Mary, when the angel came to her about being chosen to be the bearer of the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world:**

**"He would be given the throne of His father, David, and reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there would be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).**

**Joseph was told that His name would be called Jesus for He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).**

When Jesus came that first time, He was rejected by His people as their King, and they crucified HIM. But His going to the cross meant that He would die for the sins of His people and for the sins of the entire world. He rose from the dead bodily, and ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Now He could be the Savior of the world for those who trusted Him as Savior, plus be the eventual king of Israel and the world.

At the time of Christ's second advent at the end of the tribulation time, He will establish His 1000 year reign on earth, reigning from Jerusalem with His people, Israel who have turned and accepted Him as their Messiah and KING.

## **2. In our day.**

The Savior Jesus Christ has come, died on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, which is death, and conquered the grave to win His forgiveness and eternal life for all who would accept Him as personal Savior.

**Some of His words are quite disturbing to our way of thinking even as followers of Christ. Hear Christ's words in Matthew 10:34-39.**

**"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against His father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it"**

**Christ did not come at His first coming to bring peace to the world.**

**Rather, He came at His first time to provide a change of heart for those who would accept Him as personal Savior. Their lives would be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and they would desire to live for Him to do the will of God regardless of the cost.**

**It could mean persecution and tension even in families where one person accepts the Lord and the other doesn't.**

**As followers of Christ, we have the privilege to be reign in life by one Jesus Christ – believers in Christ are kings and queens to live for His glory, and to be witness of His love and grace to others.**

**How is the believer's allegiance maintained in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ?**

**By using the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:10 – the offensive piece of armor), we can maintain that vibrant life with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

**\*\*Let's not forget that we are born from above not with corruptible seed but with incorruptible seed the eternal word of God (I Peter 1:23) – yes the sword of God's word through faith in Christ brings us out of the kingdom of darkness and puts us into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ.**

**\*\*Let's not forget that the sword of God's Word is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit of the joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)**

**\*\*Let's not forget that the word of God brings conviction in our lives to confess to the Lord our attitudes of spiritual lethargy, covetousness, comparison, doubt, an unforgiving spirit, jealousy, and actions that displease Him, and words that tear down rather than build up.**

**\*\*Let's not forget that the sword of God's Spirit, the Word of God, also renews our spirits to have Christ's passion, to build each other up, to have forgiving hearts, and seek to minister to others. It's the word of God that changes us into the image of Jesus Christ. It's the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, that gives us strength and eternal hope even in the darkest hours.**

**This is from a Daily Bread.**

**" The benefits of the Word are numerous. Consider Psalm 119. "Those who keep His testimonies . . . do no iniquity (2,3). His statutes prevent shame (6), and sin (111), and be our song (54). His testimonies bring delight (24). His word revives (25), strengthens (28), and cleanses (9); brings salvation (41) and mercy (58); gives life (50), and hope (74) and keeps us from straying (67). His commandments give understanding (74). And that is only the beginning.**

**This article goes on to say that there is no greater gift that we can give to our children than a thirst, an appreciation, and a love for God's Word. As our children store up God's Word in their hearts, it will give them sure footing for life: "I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies. I . . . did not delay to keep Your commandments (59-60).**

**The Word of God, the Bible, has supernatural power.**

**Pastor Haralan Popov was dragged off to jail in Bulgaria in 1948 on false charges of espionage against the state for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and was sentenced to 13 years in prison. During his 13 years in prison he suffered indescribable anguish and persecution. Once, during solitary confinement, Pastor Popov used a tin cup to tap out the Gospel message in code on the water pipes in his cell. To his astonishment, and answer**

came back: "I am ready to believe. . . . what must I do to be saved?" Another time, in a small underground cavern with hundreds of other prisoners, he saw the opportunity to once again have a church. He became a pastor to his fellow sufferers in the stifling darkness of the cramped little cell. He was released from prison in September 1961 and joined his family in Sweden a year later. The Bulgarian government has since apologized for the wrongful sentence. Moving to the United States in 1970, He founded what became the "Door Of Hope International" to bring Bibles and relief to oppressed countries. His testimony is in his book, "Tortured For His Faith." In 1988, he was permitted to visit the church he pastored in Bulgaria. A month later in his home in Glendale, California, due to complication related to cancer, he went home to be with his Lord whom he served so faithfully.

**If we believe God's Word is the eternal Word of God, something positive for God should be happening in our lives and for His glory.**

When God's trumpet sounds for the church at the rapture, we will go to be with Christ, and be like Him forever.

When Christ comes at the end at the end of the tribulation to bring His judgment on Israel and the world, Revelation 19:15 tells us that He will come with a sharp sword in His mouth, which can be a picture of the Word of God, and He will smite the nations. He will rule with the rod of iron and bring peace to the world as He establishes His 1000 year reign on earth.

This second coming of Christ causes the multitude in heaven at the end of the tribulation period to shout four times, "Hallelujah!" Hallelujah, the Lord our God Almighty reigns!

The sword will not devour forever. Christ will come in His time and bring His peace to this world which has no peace.

**Yes, there is glory in the sword. Glory because the sword represents God's word which can bring judgment, but at the same time eternal forgiveness and life with eternal hope for all who believe in Jesus –all through the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ!!**

**May we let God's Word, the Sword of the Spirit, continue to change our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ – then when the Lord looks at our hearts, He will know that our lives are completely His for HIS GLORY!!**

