EZEKIEL 21

The Sword Unsheathed: Until He Comes

> *"A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him."*
> EZEKIEL 21:27

Where Ezekiel has brought us

1. Chapter 21 follows straight on from the forest-fire parable of 20:45–49; in Hebrew Bibles those verses actually open chapter 21.

2. So God stops telling stories.

The Sword Drawn

God draws His sword against His own land, and the prophet groans in public

EZEKIEL 21:3

and say to the land of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am against you; and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik faces the hard question in verse 3: how can God cut off "the righteous and the wicked" when chapter 18 says each man dies for his own sin?

WHAT IT MEANS

The fire of 20:47 took "every green tree" and "every dry tree"; now the plain word says the same thing about people. When a nation falls, the good suffer alongside the bad, even though God keeps the souls of His own (9:4–6).

Sword (חֶרֶב)

CHEREB · "SWORD"

Chereb is a sword, or any cutting weapon, and it is the backbone of this chapter: the notes count it in verses 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20 and 28. It is paired with ta'ar (H8593), the sheath.

The Song of the Sword

Sharpened, polished, handed to the slayer — and God claps His hands

EZEKIEL 21:13

"For there is a testing; and what if even the rod which despises will be no more?" declares the Lord GOD.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik reads verse 13 as the sword's contempt for the throne itself: 'God's sword of judgment had no regard for his right to reign, for Zedekiah's scepter.'

WHAT IT MEANS

This is a chant, almost a battle song: "A sword, a sword sharpened And also polished!" (v9). It is sharpened to kill, polished to flash like lightning, and handed "into the hand of the slayer" (v11).

Rod (שֵׁבֶט)

SHEBET · "ROD, SCEPTER"

Shebet means a rod or scepter, and also a tribe. It shows up in two of the hardest verses in Ezekiel to translate: "the rod of My son despising every tree" (v10) and "what if even the rod which despises will be no more?"

The King at the Fork in the Road

Nebuchadnezzar shakes arrows and reads a liver — and God steers the lot

EZEKIEL 21:19

"As for you, son of man, make two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik, quoting Block, explains the arrows: 'shaking two inscribed arrows and then drawing one as one draws a lot.' The king also consulted his idols and read the liver of a sacrifice.

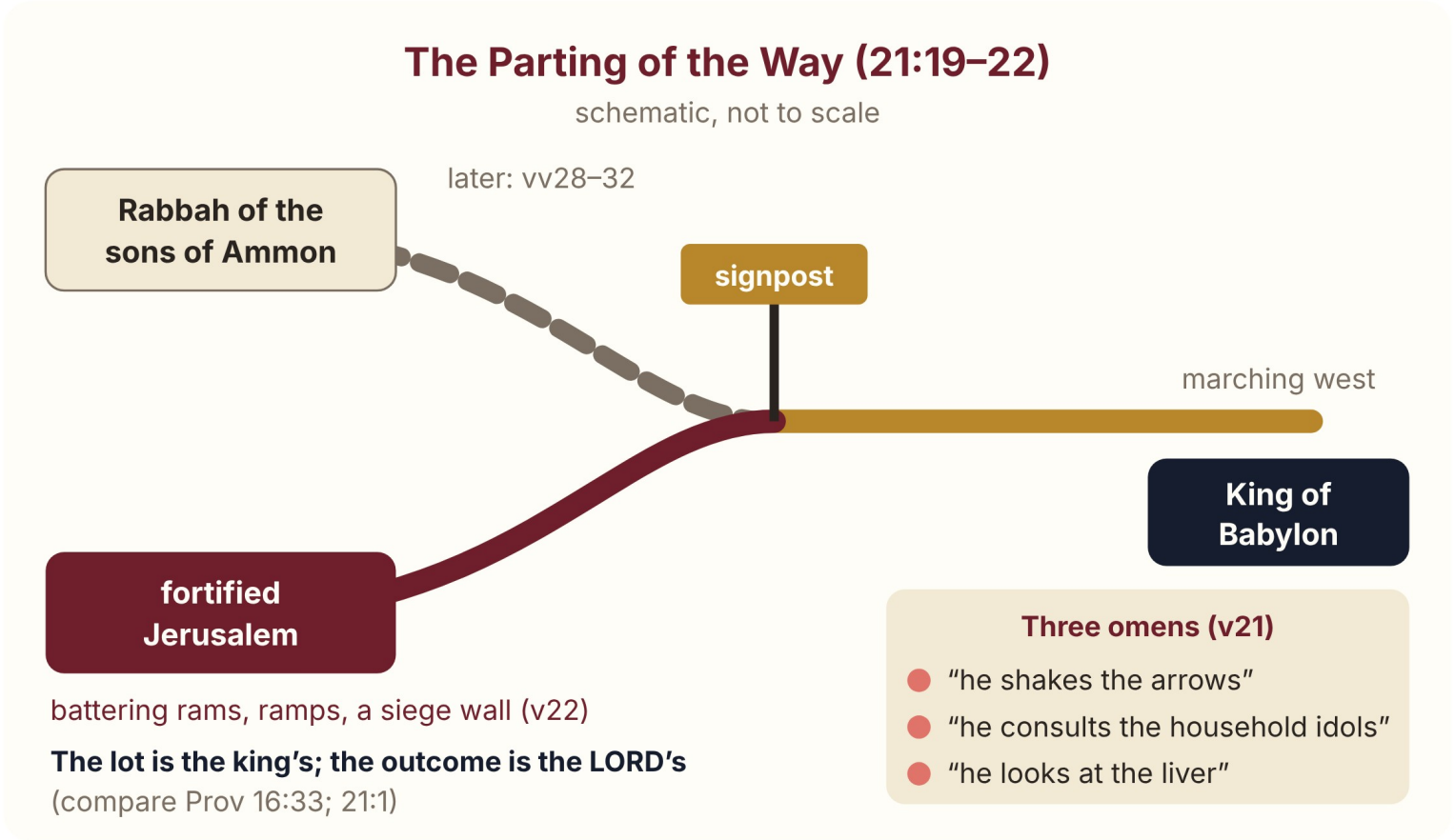
WHAT IT MEANS

God tells Ezekiel to draw a map with a signpost (v19). Babylon's army comes west to crush the revolt, and the road splits: one way to "Rabbah of the sons of Ammon," the other to "Judah into fortified Jerusalem" (v20).

Divination (קֶסֶם)
QESEM · "DIVINATION"

Qesem is an oracle, a reading of omens. It runs through verses 21, 22, 23 and 29.

The King at the Fork in the Road (21:18–23)



Babylon's king reads three omens at the parting of the way, but the LORD steers the lot to Jerusalem; Ammon's turn comes later (vv28–32).

The Crown Removed

The profane prince loses turban and crown — until He comes whose right it is

EZEKIEL 21:27

'A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.'

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik identifies 'the prince of Israel (probably Zedekiah).' He broke his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, and in 586 B.C.

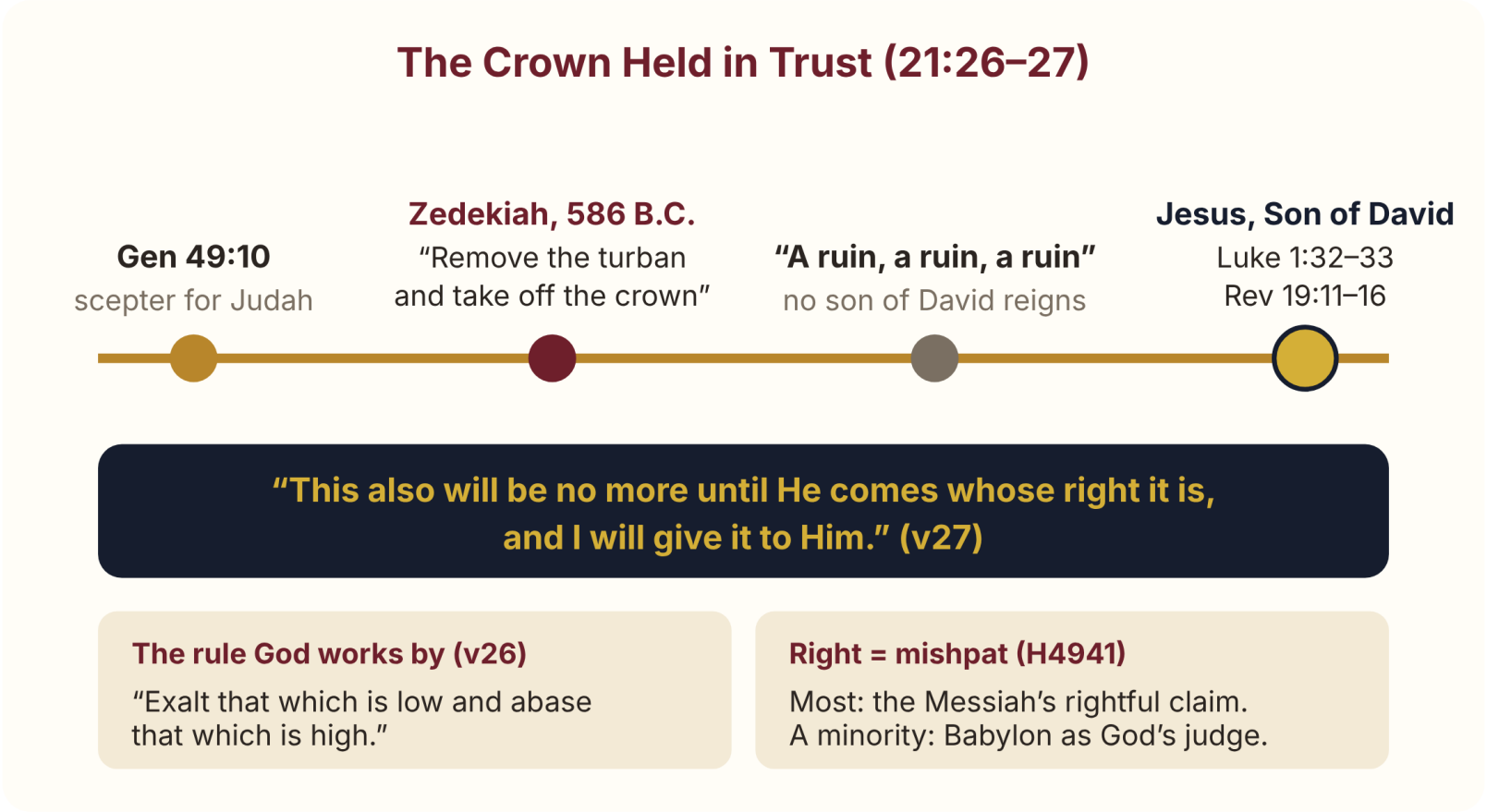
WHAT IT MEANS

Zedekiah is called "O slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come" (v25). His sins are uncovered and remembered.

Right (מִשְׁפָּט)
MISHPAT · "RIGHT, JUSTICE"

Mishpat means justice, judgment, or rightful claim. In verse 27 it is the hinge of the promise: the crown will be no more "until He comes whose right it is."

Until He Comes Whose Right It Is (21:25–27)



The crown comes off David's last reigning son in 586 B.C. and lies in ruins until the King with the rightful claim comes.

The Sword Turns on Ammon

Ammon's diviners promised safety; Ammon will not be remembered

EZEKIEL 21:28

"And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,' and say: 'A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be like lightning—

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik passes on two observations about Ammon's end. Clarke: 'This prophecy against them was fulfilled about five years after the taking of Jerusalem.'

WHAT IT MEANS

Ammon escaped the lot at the crossroads and may have gloated. But God says again, "A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter" (v28).

Fuel (אָכְלָה)
OKLAH · "FOOD, FUEL"

Oklah means food, and so fuel for a fire, the thing a fire eats. God tells Ammon, "You will be fuel for the fire" (v32).

What to carry from this chapter

1

The parable becomes plain.

The forest fire of 20:47 is now named for what it is: God's sword against Jerusalem.

2

Temporal, not final.

Guzik reads "the righteous and the wicked" (v3) as national judgment that falls on all, while God keeps the souls of His own.

3

A groaning messenger.

God told Ezekiel to groan in their sight, because a warning carried with grief is heard differently.

4

The sword and its sheath.

Chereb (H2719) comes out of the sheath three times and is not sent back until Ammon's judgment (v30).

More to carry

5

God steers the lot.

Guzik passes on Feinberg: the king thought his gods decided, but God was determining his course.

6

A broken oath.

Zedekiah, the profane prince, lost his crown after breaking his sworn word to Babylon (17:13–19).

7

The crown waits.

Mishpat (H4941), the rightful claim, points to the One who has the right to David's throne.

8

Overlooked promise.

Wright, in Guzik, calls verse 27 one of the great Messianic promises of the Old Testament.

Talk it through

1. How can God cut off “the righteous and the wicked” (v3) and still be just, in light of chapter 18?

2. Why did God want Ezekiel to groan in public before he explained the message?

3. What does the king’s divination at the crossroads teach about who really rules events?

4. What did Zedekiah lose, and what promise did God keep alive in the same breath?

5. Why does Israel get a future King while Ammon “will not be remembered”?

CLOSING

God's sword came out of its sheath, and every crown in Jerusalem fell into the dust. But God did not lose track of the throne. Jesus is the One whose right it is, and He can take the crown in every ruined place of a man's life.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides and reflection journal: see the Ezekiel study page.