

Dr. Leslie Allen, Daniel, Session 11, God's Sword against Sinful Jerusalem (Ezek 20:45-23:49) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Allen, Ezekiel, Session 11, God's Sword against Sinful Jerusalem (Ezek 20:45-23:49), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Leslie Allen's lecture focuses on Ezekiel 20:45-23:49, exploring God's judgment against Jerusalem and Judah through the metaphor of a sword. **The lecture examines Ezekiel's prophecies**, interpreting messages of divine punishment and the reasons behind it, with particular attention to the sins of Jerusalem and Judah. **Allen analyzes the symbolic language used, such as forest fires and swords**, to understand the impending military attacks and God's role as both arsonist and swordsman. **The lecture also highlights Ezekiel's struggle to communicate these messages effectively**, fearing they would be dismissed as mere allegories, and God's subsequent revamping of the message using different metaphors, and **finally concludes with a reflection on the unfaithfulness of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms**, using the metaphor of two adulterous sisters.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Allen, Ezekiel, Session 11 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Ezekiel).



**Allen_Ezekiel_Sessi
on11.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 11, God's Sword against Sinful Jerusalem (Ezek 20:45-23:49)

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Leslie Allen's Lecture 11 on Ezekiel 20:45-23:49:

Briefing Document: Ezekiel 20:45-23:49 - God's Sword Against Sinful Jerusalem and Judah

Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Leslie Allen focuses on Ezekiel's prophecies concerning God's judgment against Jerusalem and Judah (Ezekiel 20:45-23:49). Allen emphasizes the logical sequencing of these chapters: punishment (represented by the "sword" in chapters 20-21), followed by the reasons for the punishment (the sinfulness of Jerusalem in chapter 22, and the sinfulness of Judah in chapter 23). He highlights the use of metaphors and symbolic actions within Ezekiel's messages and discusses the historical and theological context of these prophecies.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **The Sword as a Metaphor for God's Punishment:** The lecture highlights the prominent use of "sword" as a keyword and metaphor throughout Ezekiel 21, representing God's punishment enacted through the Babylonians. Allen points out, "There's good reason for it to start verse 21 at our present verse 1 in our English versions because all of verse 21 is a group of messages that have a keyword in them, sword, sword, sword, all the way through chapter 21." The lecture also examines the earlier message in 20:45-49, which uses the metaphor of a forest fire to convey a similar message of divine judgment.
- **Ezekiel's Reluctance and God's Reinterpretation:** Ezekiel initially hesitates to deliver the message of the forest fire due to its metaphorical nature. God responds by offering a more direct message using the image of the sword. As Allen says, "Ezekiel doesn't want to give it, and he says they're not going to like this message. They're going to find this too metaphorical and too allegorical... So, can I put it over in a different way, please? And that's the significance of verse 49. Ah, Lord God! That's his protest."
- **Totality of Destruction vs. Rhetorical Device:** While the prophecies speak of total destruction, including both righteous and wicked, Allen suggests this totality is a rhetorical enhancement to emphasize the overwhelming nature of God's

intervention, especially in light of earlier messages of some being spared. He explains, "It's going to be so total that not only the bad guys but the good guys are going to be destroyed... So earlier messages had mentioned the survival of some, and so we have to say that here, the totality is a rhetorical enhancement or embellishment to drive home the overwhelming nature of God's intervention against the homeland in fact 587 because that is what is in mind ultimately."

- **Symbolic Actions and Mourning:** Ezekiel is instructed to perform symbolic actions, such as loud mourning, to demonstrate the appropriate response to the impending disaster. This emphasizes the vocal and demonstrative nature of mourning in the Israelite tradition. Quote: "He's to engage in loud mourning, loud mourning cries...The Israelite tradition of mourning was very vocal, and it's this vocal aspect that is pointed to here."
- **Nebuchadnezzar's Decision and Divine Sovereignty:** The lecture discusses Nebuchadnezzar's decision-making process regarding whether to attack Ammon or Judah first, including his use of divination. However, Allen emphasizes that God is ultimately sovereign and working through these pagan practices to bring about His will. He notes, "All this omen-seeking, you know, the prisoners of war would turn up their noses at mention of that... what really is being said here is that God is supreme over this, and God is working through these omens, and from God ultimately comes this order."
- **The Fate of Babylon:** While the primary focus is on Judah's suffering, there's a brief hint of hope with the pronouncement of judgment on Babylon (represented by the "sword"). As Allen notes, "This is the only place in the book of Ezekiel where we have the final fate of the Babylonians... But I was making plain to those who had ears to hear that eventually, the great imperial power of Babylon would fall." This echoes the pattern found in Isaiah 10, where Assyria is used as an instrument of God's judgment but is then punished for its own arrogance.
- **Chapter 22: Jerusalem's Sins:** Chapter 22 shifts the focus to the reasons *why* Jerusalem faces such dire consequences. It details a range of sins, including bloodshed, idolatry, mistreatment of the vulnerable, and disregard for the Sabbath. The metaphor of the silversmith's furnace is used to illustrate the intense judgment coming upon the city. "The city of bloodshed. And this message is going to be picking up the word blood all the way through."

- **Chapter 23: Judah's Unfaithfulness (Political and Religious):** Chapter 23 uses the metaphor of wrong sexuality to illustrate Judah's political and religious unfaithfulness. Allen points out the graphic nature of the language used, meant to shock the exiles into understanding the gravity of their situation. He draws parallels to Chapter 16 (Jerusalem as an unfaithful wife) but notes that Chapter 23 focuses more on political alliances as a form of unfaithfulness to God. "Ezekiel is doing it again using these nasty words, these unpleasant words, and oh my, these shocking words, and of course, the intention is to shock the prisoners of war into accepting what they do not want to hear, and so it has to be exaggerated."
- **The Two Sisters: Ohelah and Oholibah:** Chapter 23 presents the Northern and Southern Kingdoms as God's two wives, Ohelah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem), who have been unfaithful through their alliances with other nations.
- **The Cup of Judgment:** The lecture points out the new metaphor in chapter 23 of the cup of judgement. The Northern Kingdom (Samaria) already drank from this cup with the Assyrian domination. Now Judah will face a similar fate with the Babylonians. "And this is the cup of judgment... You should drink your sister's cup. Just as the Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians. So, you were finally going to fall to the Babylonians, your former lovers with whom you were glad to make a treaty."
- **Purpose of the Punishment:** Ultimately, the purpose of the destruction is for the people to recognize and understand the true nature of God. As seen in the end of verse 49, "And you shall know that I am the Lord."

Overall Significance:

Dr. Allen's lecture provides a detailed analysis of Ezekiel's prophecies, emphasizing the themes of judgment, sin, and divine sovereignty. It highlights the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context of these prophecies and the powerful use of metaphor and symbolic action in Ezekiel's messages. The lecture also offers insights into the theological implications of God's judgment and the ultimate purpose of restoration.

4. Study Guide: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 11, God's Sword against Sinful Jerusalem (Ezek 20:45-23:49),

Ezekiel's Judgment: A Study Guide (Ezekiel 20:45-23:49)

Review of Key Concepts

Ezekiel 20:45-21:7: The Shift from Forest Fire to Sword

- Understand the initial metaphor of the forest fire and its significance.
- Why is the forest fire reinterpreted into the metaphor of the sword?
- What is Ezekiel's objection to the forest fire message and why?
- How does the sword message function as a "revamping" of the forest fire message?
- Identify the rhetorical purpose of totality in the slaughter and its relationship to earlier messages.

Ezekiel 21:8-17: The Sword's Independent Life

- How is the sword personified in this passage, and what does this imagery convey?
- Understand the significance of Ezekiel's symbolic actions (striking the thigh, hand clapping) and God's response.
- Recognize the poetic nature of this section and its contrast with Ezekiel's usual prose.

Ezekiel 21:18-27: Nebuchadnezzar's Choice and Zedekiah's Fate

- What is the symbolic action God orders Ezekiel to perform?
- Explain Nebuchadnezzar's divination process and its significance within the context of the passage.
- Understand how God uses pagan practices to reveal his will.
- What is the message to Zedekiah, and what does it signify about the social order in Judah?

Ezekiel 21:28-32: The Sword's Return

- How does this section function as a summary of the earlier sword messages?

- What is the surprising new order given to the sword, and what does it signify?
- Understand the connection to Isaiah 10:5-15 and the double program for Israel's enemies.
- Why is Babylon not explicitly named in the text, and what is the significance of this omission?

Ezekiel 22: Jerusalem's Sins

- What is the "normal order" of judgement and how is it altered here?
- Identify the significance of the word "blood" as a keyword in this chapter.
- What are the two central sins highlighted at the beginning of the chapter?
- How has the royal house impacted the citizens of Jerusalem?
- Understand the metaphor of the silversmith and smelting and how it relates to Jerusalem's fate.
- How does the end of the chapter establish certainty by looking back at 587 BCE?

Ezekiel 23: The Adulterous Sisters

- Why does Ezekiel resort to "coarse and vulgar" language?
- How does this chapter parallel Chapter 16 while contrasting with it?
- What is the significance of Ezekiel's emphasis on political unfaithfulness?
- Understand the significance of alliances as a form of unfaithfulness.
- Who are Ohelah and Oholibah, and what do their names signify?
- Understand the metaphor of the cup of judgment and its connection to other biblical texts.

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. **Explain the significance of the shift in imagery from the forest fire in Ezekiel 20:45-49 to the sword in Ezekiel 21:1-7.** Why do you think God shifted from the forest fire to a sword as a symbol of the coming destruction?
2. **In Ezekiel 21:8-17, the sword is described as having an independent life. What does this personification suggest about the nature of God's judgment?** How does it make the coming destruction seem inevitable?

3. **Describe the symbolic action that Ezekiel is ordered to perform in Ezekiel 21:18-27. What is the significance of Nebuchadnezzar's divination process in determining the path of his military campaign?**
4. **In Ezekiel 21:28-32, the sword is ordered to return to its sheath. What does this imply about the eventual fate of Babylon? What significance does this order have for the exiles in Babylon?**
5. **Explain the metaphor of the silversmith and smelting in Ezekiel 22:18-22. What does this imagery convey about the nature of Jerusalem's punishment?**
6. **What are the two primary sins for which Jerusalem is condemned in Ezekiel 22:1-16? In what ways had Jerusalem become a "city of bloodshed"?**
7. **Why does Ezekiel use shocking and explicit language in Ezekiel 23 to describe the sins of Oholah and Oholibah? Why would the exiles respond to such language, and what effect would it have on them?**
8. **Explain the significance of the names Oholah and Oholibah (Ezekiel 23:4). What do these names suggest about the relationship between God and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah?**
9. **What is the "cup of judgment" metaphor in Ezekiel 23:32-34? How does this imagery contribute to the overall message of impending doom?**
10. **In Ezekiel 22:17-31, identify the leadership groupings in Jerusalem and how their actions led to Jerusalem's destruction.**

Answer Key

1. The shift represents a move towards a more direct and easily understood image of military attack. Ezekiel initially protests the forest fire metaphor, fearing it would be too allegorical. God shifted to a sword as a symbol of direct military action and judgment.
2. This personification suggests that God's judgment is powerful and unstoppable, acting with its own agency. It emphasizes the inevitability and force of the impending destruction, making it seem less like a choice and more like a preordained event.
3. Ezekiel is to mark out two roads for the king of Babylon's sword, symbolizing Nebuchadnezzar's decision to attack either Ammon or Judah. The divination

process shows that even seemingly random events are ultimately under God's control, determining the path of his judgment.

4. This implies that Babylon, too, will eventually face judgment and be punished for its actions. It offers a glimmer of hope to the exiles by suggesting that their oppressors will not go unpunished.
5. The silversmith metaphor illustrates that Jerusalem is like impure ore being refined in a furnace, undergoing intense suffering. The imagery conveys a sense of purification through fire, but also emphasizes the destructive nature of the process.
6. The two primary sins are shedding blood and engaging in idol worship. Jerusalem was condemned for its violence, injustice, and disregard for human life, as well as for its abandonment of the true God in favor of false idols.
7. Ezekiel uses shocking language to jolt the exiles out of their complacency and force them to confront the severity of their sins. The explicit language aims to provoke a strong reaction and make them heed the warning of impending judgment.
8. Ohelah ("her tent") and Oholibah ("my tent is in her") suggest a broken covenant and unfulfilled marital promises. The names imply that while God initially dwelled among them, they defiled the relationship and abandoned their commitment to him.
9. The "cup of judgment" represents the full measure of God's wrath and punishment that Judah must drink. It symbolizes the overwhelming suffering and devastation that awaits them, mirroring the fate of the Northern Kingdom.
10. The leadership groupings were the royal house, the princes of Israel, priests, and prophets. Their corruption, greed, and failure to uphold justice and righteousness led to widespread sin and ultimately, Jerusalem's destruction.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of symbolic actions in Ezekiel 20:45-23:49. How do these actions reinforce the messages conveyed through the prophet's words? Provide specific examples from the text.
2. Compare and contrast Ezekiel's use of metaphor in Ezekiel 20:45-23:49. How do the metaphors of the forest fire, the sword, the silversmith's smelting, and the cup of judgment contribute to the overall message of judgment and restoration?
3. Explore the theme of political unfaithfulness in Ezekiel 23. How does Ezekiel portray the alliances made by Israel and Judah as a form of adultery against God?
4. Discuss the complex portrayal of God's sovereignty in Ezekiel 21. How does God use pagan practices and foreign powers to fulfill his purposes? What does this suggest about God's control over history?
5. Examine the role of individual responsibility versus collective guilt in Ezekiel 20:45-23:49. To what extent are the people of Jerusalem and Judah held accountable for the sins of their leaders, and vice versa?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Allegory:** A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
- **Babylon:** A major Mesopotamian kingdom and empire that exiled the people of Judah in the 6th century BCE.
- **Divination:** The practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means.
- **Exile:** The state of being barred from one's native country, typically for political or punitive reasons; refers to the Babylonian exile of the Judeans in 597 and 587/6 BCE.
- **Forest Fire Metaphor:** A symbol used in Ezekiel 20:45-49 to represent God's impending judgment and destruction of Judah.
- **Jerusalem:** The capital city of Judah, a focal point of religious and political life, and the target of God's judgment in Ezekiel.

- **Judah:** The southern kingdom of Israel, often contrasted with the northern kingdom of Samaria.
- **Metaphor:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.
- **Nebuchadnezzar:** The king of Babylon who led the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.
- **Ohelah:** (Hebrew: "Her tent") Represents Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, symbolizing its early idolatry.
- **Oholibah:** (Hebrew: "My tent is in her") Represents Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, symbolizing its later idolatry.
- **Samaria:** The capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- **Siege:** A military tactic in which an army surrounds a city or fortress, cutting off supplies and forcing it to surrender.
- **Smelting Metaphor:** A symbol used in Ezekiel 22:18-22, representing the refining fire of God's judgment that will purify or destroy Jerusalem.
- **Sword Metaphor:** A symbol used in Ezekiel 21 to represent God's military judgment and destruction of Judah.
- **Symbolic Action:** A physical act performed by a prophet to illustrate a divine message or prophecy.
- **Teraphim:** Household idols or images used for divination in ancient Near Eastern cultures.
- **Zedekiah:** The last king of Judah before the Babylonian exile.
- **Cup of Judgement:** A metaphor for the full measure of God's wrath and punishment that the unfaithful will receive.

5. FAQs on Allen, Ezekiel, Session 11, God's Sword against Sinful Jerusalem (Ezek 20:45-23:49), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source:

FAQ on Ezekiel 20:45 - 23:49

1. Why does Dr. Allen argue that Ezekiel 20:45 should be considered the start of a new section, despite the chapter division in English Bibles?

Dr. Allen argues that while English Bibles begin chapter 21 with the focus on the "sword" as a keyword, Ezekiel 20:45 initiates a new theme related to God's punishment. The message beginning in 20:45 uses the metaphor of a forest fire to communicate the same judgment later expressed through the sword metaphor in chapter 21. He sees chapter 21:1-7 as a reinterpretation in different terms of what was said in 20:45-49.

2. What is the overarching sequence and thematic progression in Ezekiel chapters 20:45 to 23:49?

The sequence moves logically from the declaration of God's punishment (using the "sword" as a metaphor) to the reasons for this punishment. Chapter 22 explains the sins of Jerusalem that merit the punishment, while Chapter 23 explains the sins of Judah. Thus, the progression is: punishment, reason for punishment in Jerusalem, and reason for punishment in Judah.

3. What are the two metaphors used to describe God's impending judgment on Judah and Jerusalem, and how do they differ in their impact?

The two primary metaphors are a forest fire (Ezekiel 20:45-49) and a sword (Ezekiel 21). The forest fire vividly illustrates widespread destruction, scorching everything in its path. However, Ezekiel expresses concern that this metaphor might be too allegorical for the people to understand. The sword, on the other hand, is a more direct and easily recognizable symbol of military attack and warfare, representing the Babylonian invasion.

4. How does Ezekiel react to God's initial command to prophesy using the metaphor of the forest fire, and why?

Ezekiel is hesitant and protests, fearing that the people will not understand or appreciate the allegorical nature of the forest fire metaphor. He worries they will dismiss him as a "maker of allegories" and requests a more straightforward message.

5. What is the significance of Nebuchadnezzar's divination practices in Ezekiel 21, and how does it relate to God's plan?

Ezekiel 21 describes Nebuchadnezzar using pagan methods of divination (shaking arrows, consulting teraphim, inspecting the liver of an animal) to decide whether to attack Ammon or Jerusalem first. The text indicates that, despite these pagan practices, God is ultimately in control and uses these methods to direct Nebuchadnezzar to attack Jerusalem, fulfilling God's judgment.

6. According to the lecture, what are the primary sins of Jerusalem as outlined in Ezekiel 22?

The sins of Jerusalem are multifaceted, but the key sins highlighted are: widespread bloodshed and violence, neglect of traditional prohibitions against idolatry, contempt for parents, oppression of aliens, orphans, and widows, slander, breaking the Sabbath, and engaging in pagan feasts.

7. How does Ezekiel 23 use the metaphor of "unfaithful wives" (Oheleh and Oholibah) to illustrate the sins of Samaria (Northern Kingdom) and Jerusalem (Southern Kingdom)?

Ezekiel 23 portrays Samaria and Jerusalem as two sisters (wives of God) who commit adultery by forming political alliances with foreign nations (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt). This "playing the whore" is a metaphor for their political unfaithfulness and reliance on other nations instead of trusting in God. The chapter uses explicit sexual language to shock the exiles into recognizing the gravity of their unfaithfulness.

8. What happens to the sword of Babylon at the end of chapter 21?

The sword is given a new order to return to its sheath. The Lord will judge Babylon. This suggests that Babylon, as the agent of God's wrath, will eventually face judgment itself for its actions, echoing the theme found in Isaiah 10 and offering a glimmer of hope for Judah's future.