

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

“Ain’t it Divine”

21:18-32

Anybody who watches movies loves to quote dialog from iconic films. Everyone has quoted, “I’ll make him an offer he can’t refuse,” from *The Godfather*, or “I’ve got a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore,” from *The Wizard of Oz*.

I have one that our family has used over the years. It may not be familiar to you; see if you can recognize it. Don’t shout it out, if you know it.

“The bones tell me nothing!”

It’s from the 1988 movie, *Willow*, directed by Ron Howard, produced and co-written by George Lucas. The main character, Willow Ufgood, is a Nelwyn (a little person) on a quest to protect a special human baby from a tyrannical queen.

Early in the movie the High Aldwin, or sorcerer, played by Billy Barty, needs to make an important decision. He tells everyone, “I must consult the bones!” He means to practice divination using a bag of bones. But after he throws the bones, he secretly tells Willow, “The bones tell me nothing,” indicating that they have no real power to divine anything.

In our text tonight King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon practices divination to make an important decision. God will overrule the results to accomplish His divine providence.

Ezekiel 21:18 The word of the Lord came to me again, saying:

Ezekiel 21:19 "And son of man, appoint for yourself two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to go; both of them shall go from the same land. Make a sign; put it at the head of the road to the city.

Ezekiel 21:20 Appoint a road for the sword to go to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah, into fortified Jerusalem.

Ezekiel was called upon to draw some sort of sketch of the road from Babylon to Rabbah of the Ammonites and to Jerusalem. It was a visual representation to say that Nebuchadnezzar was coming to execute judgment upon both cities; he just wasn't sure which one to hit first.

The Jews in Jerusalem had tried to ally with the Ammonites against Babylon in about 593BC. It was a foolish alliance that would bring serious repercussions upon both cities.

Alliances carry consequences. Be careful in business and even in friendships.

Ezekiel 21:21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver.

We call this kind of thing 'divination.' One definition of divination is,

...the attempt to gain insight into a question or situation by way of a standardized process or ritual. Diviners ascertain their interpretations of how a questioner should proceed by reading signs, events, or omens, or through alleged contact with a supernatural agency.

Forms of divination common to our culture would be astrology, cards (like Tarot cards), palm reading, numerology, and the ouija board.

Believe it or not there is now something called cybermancy, a form of divination utilizing computers. These are usually divination programs, but may include reference materials, such as programs which track the phase of the moon, which practitioners of ritual magic need for timing their spells. Astrologers have long used computers to create their charts.

Nebuchadnezzar employed the common means of sixth-century divination.

1. First there was the process of making arrows with names, placing them in a quiver, whirling them about, and the first one to fall out was the answer of the god you were invoking.
2. Second, “images,” or idols, were consulted. I’m not sure how they ‘answered.’ Probably like the casting of lots.
3. Third, the liver of a dead sheep was examined and the answer from your god was determined by the color and peculiar markings of the liver.

Nebuchadnezzar employed all three methods with the same result: lay siege first to Jerusalem. *So that’s what he did!*

Ezekiel 21:22 In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a siege mound, and to build a wall.

Ezekiel somehow represented the advance of the Babylonian armies along the road to Jerusalem, and the siege of Jerusalem. He was a master with props! It was like “Ezekiel Light & Magic.”

Ezekiel 21:23 And it will be to them like a false divination in the eyes of those who have sworn oaths with them; but he will bring their iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken.

The residents of Jerusalem thought of Nebuchadnezzar’s use of divination as something “false” that God would not honor. In other words, since Nebuchadnezzar was appealing to false and forbidden practices, the God of Israel would stop him before he got to Jerusalem.

Nope. Not gonna happen.

“Those who have sworn oaths” seems to refer to the Jews trusting in their covenant relationship with Jehovah to save them, even though they were walking in iniquity and practicing open idolatry.

As I explained a week or so ago, just because Israel was God’s elect nation it did not mean you were automatically saved. It didn’t give you a free pass

to sin against God's revealed word and will. Throughout Israel's history only a remnant were saved - those who believed God and to whom God accounted it as righteousness.

God didn't use divination, He didn't condone it, with Nebuchadnezzar. He overruled it to accomplish His purposes on the earth.

There are multiple Scriptures warning believers against the use of any form of divination. Deuteronomy 18:10-14 is an example.

Deuteronomy 18:10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,

Deuteronomy 18:11 or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

Deuteronomy 18:12 For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you.

Deuteronomy 18:13 You shall be blameless before the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 18:14 For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you.

Punishment was severe:

Leviticus 20:27 'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.' "

Stay away from all that stuff! Even as an entertainment, be very careful with it.

We have liberty. We don't have liberty to engage in anything specifically prohibited by Scripture.

I'm not going to give you a list of movies or books or TV programs you can and cannot watch. I am, however, going to encourage you to think hard about anything involving the supernatural, especially if you have kids.

These next few verses, twenty-four through twenty-seven, are extremely insightful. They mark something very dramatic.

Ezekiel 21:24 "Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your doings your sins appear - because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand.

Ezekiel 21:25 'Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end,

Ezekiel 21:26 thus says the Lord God: "Remove the turban, and take off the crown; Nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted.

Ezekiel 21:27 Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, Until He comes whose right it is, And I will give it to Him." '

Verse twenty-four is another announcement of the impending judgment at the hands of Babylon.

The “profane, wicked prince of Israel” was governor Zedekiah whose rebellion politically against Nebuchadnezzar was the final straw bringing the siege upon them.

It’s what comes next that is amazing. "Remove the turban, and take off the crown.” The turban was the headdress of the high priest. The crown was, of course, the headdress of the king.

The priesthood and the kingship were to be “overthrown, overthrown, overthrown...Until He comes whose right it is...” The “He” is, of course, the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus Christ.

What these verses declare is that there will be no effective priesthood or king in Israel until the Second Coming of Jesus when the Father “will give it to Him.”

Since the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, there has been no effective priesthood. Yes, there was a Temple after that, with priests serving in it, at least up until 70AD. But in that Temple there was no ark of the covenant, no mercy seat, and therefore no presence of the glory of God.

As we report on Sundays in our Prophecy Updates, the Temple Institute in Israel has made most of the implements needed in a rebuilt Temple. They can now identify, genetically, the priests.

But none of that can cancel-out what God said through Ezekiel.

As far as kings go, there has been no king from the line of David since Ezekiel spoke these words.

If you were writing a history of Israel from then til the Second Coming, it's subtitle could be the phrase in verse twenty-six, "Nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted."

The residents of Rabbah must have breathed a sigh of relief when it was reported that the Babylonian armies turned toward Jerusalem. It was but a brief respite for them, however.

Ezekiel 21:28 "And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord God concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach,' and say: 'A sword, a sword is drawn, Polished for slaughter, For consuming, for flashing -

Ezekiel 21:29 While they see false visions for you, While they divine a lie to you, To bring you on the necks of the wicked, the slain Whose day has come, Whose iniquity shall end.

Ezekiel 21:30 'Return it to its sheath. I will judge you In the place where you were created, In the land of your nativity.

Ezekiel 21:31 I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow against you with the fire of My wrath, And deliver you into the hands of brutal men who are skillful to destroy.

Ezekiel 21:32 You shall be fuel for the fire; Your blood shall be in the midst of the land. You shall not be remembered, For I the Lord have spoken.' "

The Ammonites were descendants of Abraham's nephew, Lot, and were, thus, near relatives to the Jews.

The Ammonites had their seers, soothsayers, diviners, and false prophets, which they are bid to be aware of, and are cautioned against hearkening to. These told them they were in the utmost safety, and that the king of Babylon would not come against them; or, if he did, would not succeed.

The Ammonites thought they had escaped Nebuchadnezzar's judgment but they would be punished. In God's wrath and fiery anger He would hand Ammon over to brutal men, men skilled in destruction. These invaders are identified in Ezekiel 25:4 as "people of the East," possibly a reference to nomadic invaders.

"Until He comes," the Jews are being humbled. History bears out what Ezekiel spoke.

We, the church, have our own "until He comes," but it is not a reference to His Second Coming. It's a reference to His imminent coming to resurrect and rapture the church prior to His Second Coming.

Meantime we are His kingdom of priests on the earth, revealing God to men and bringing men to God.

