

Ezekiel 38:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother.

Analysis

This prophetic word demonstrates God's sovereign control over history and nations. Even pagan empires and hostile coalitions serve God's purposes while remaining morally accountable for their actions. This Reformed understanding of providence affirms that nothing occurs outside God's decree, yet human agents bear full responsibility for their choices. The prophecy serves pastoral purposes: assuring God's people of His protection, warning enemies of certain judgment, and demonstrating that history moves toward God's appointed end. These prophecies find layered fulfillment—immediate historical, ongoing spiritual, and ultimate eschatological.

Historical Context

This passage was delivered during the Babylonian exile (c. 586-571 BCE) after Jerusalem's destruction. The exiled community grappled with theological and practical questions: Why had judgment come? Would restoration occur? How should they live in exile? The historical context of ancient Near Eastern covenant patterns, conquest and exile practices, and prophetic literature provides essential background. Archaeological discoveries from this period illuminate the exile's realities and the return's historical fulfillment. Yet Ezekiel's prophecies extend beyond immediate historical context to find fuller realization in Christ and the church, with ultimate consummation in the new creation.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen your understanding of God's character, purposes, or ways of working in history?
2. What specific application does this passage call you to make in your current circumstances or spiritual life?
3. How does this Old Testament passage illuminate New Testament teaching about Christ, salvation, or the church?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶקְרָא אֹתִי לְכָל עַל יוֹ הָרִי כָּרֵב
And I will call H7121 **against him throughout all my mountains** H2022 **for a sword** H2719

וְאֵשׁ בָּאֵחַ יוֹ אֵל יֵשׁ כָּרֵב יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי נָא
saith H5002 **the Lord** H136 **GOD** H3069 **for a sword** H2719 **every man's** H376 **shall be against his brother** H251

תְּהִיָּה:
H1961

Additional Cross-References

Haggai 2:22 (Word): And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

Ezekiel 14:17 (Word): Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it:

Judges 7:22 (Word): And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

2 Chronicles 20:23 (Parallel theme): For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

1 Samuel 14:20 (Word): And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture.