

Ezekiel 06 - Ezekiel's Sermon

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

(2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)

(A) Imminent judgment (Ezek 4:1—11:25)

(b) Two sermons showing cause of the siege (6:1—7:27)

(i) Idolatry as the cause of judgment (6:1-14)

(a) Judgment against idolatry (6:1-7)

(b) Remnant spared (6:8-10)

(c) Judgment against idolatry (6:11-14)

Introduction to Ezekiel 6

Ezek 6-7 are "messages" or sermons. Until now Ezekiel had been pretty much just acting things out; he had been doing things to demonstrate object lessons. Now he is going to elaborate on the meaning of what went on before, in effect, editorials. Up to this point we have had prophecies which largely concerned Jerusalem. However, the prophet will now turn his attention to the whole land of Israel: judgment is going to come upon the entire land. Some of the things Ezekiel talks about are not limited to the Babylonian Captivity...his perspective is actually all the way through the *diaspora*.

Ezekiel is with the second delegation of people who were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. These were agricultural slaves of the government of Babylon working in the area by the river Chebar, the great canal running off the Euphrates River. Most of the people, however, were still back in the land, and Jerusalem had not yet been devastated. The false prophets continued to assure the people that everything was going to be all right and that the captives would be able to return shortly. Meanwhile, Jeremiah was saying that the captivity would last 70 years, but they paid no attention to him. They listened to the false prophets because their message was more popular and user-friendly.

Ezekiel 6

(b) Two sermons showing cause of the siege (6:1—7:27)

(i) Idolatry as the cause of judgment (6:1-14)

(a) Judgment against idolatry (6:1-7)

1 Now **the word of the LORD came** to me, saying,

1 And the word of the LORD came to me saying,

1 The LORD continued with his message to me.

1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

- "...the word of the LORD came" - *wayhi devar YHWH*, indicates a new prophecy is revealed in this chapter, separate from that of Ezek 5
- The focus of this new prophecy is on the mountains of Israel (Cf. v2), which were the primary locations for the practice of idolatry
- The prophecy is broken down into three parts:
 - The cause of the judgment (idolatry) (v1-7)
 - Describe the remnant of the judgment (v8-10)
 - Detail the desolation of the land (v11-14)

2 "Son of man, **set your face** toward the **mountains of Israel**, and prophesy against them

2 "Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them

2 "Son of Man," he said, "turn your face to oppose the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them.

2 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

- This verse opens the first of the two messages; the second message in Ezek 7 begins the same way
- Both of these messages conclude with "and they shall know that I am the Lord" (a phrase used 70x in Ezekiel)
- "...set your face" - in Ezekiel this phrase means to set oneself in opposition to whatever is being addressed (Cf. 13:17; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 38:2)
- "...mountains of Israel" - the objects of this new prophecy, which Ezekiel is commanded to oppose, were the centers of idolatry in the Land (Cf. Lev 26:30; 2 Kings 16:4; Is 65:7; Jer 3:6; Hosea 4:13)

3 and say, 'Mountains of Israel, listen to the word of the Lord GOD! This is what the Lord GOD says to the mountains, **the hills, the ravines, and the valleys**: "Behold, I Myself am going to bring a sword against you, and **I will destroy your high places**.

3 and say, 'Mountains of Israel, listen to the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys: "Behold, I Myself am going to bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places.

3 Tell the mountains of Israel to listen as the Lord GOD speaks. This is what the Lord GOD has to say to the mountains, hills, streams, and the valleys: 'Look! I'm about to bring my sword against you. I'm going to destroy your high places.

3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your highplaces.

- "...the hills, the ravines, and the valleys" - additional locations in the Land, other than the mountains, where idolatry was heavily practiced

- The Israelites consistently turned away from God, engaging in Molech worship and building high places for Baal (Cf. Jer 32:35)
- Even Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, sinned by building idolatrous high places for his foreign wives outside of Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:4-8), leading to the loss of his kingdom (1 Kings 11:9-11)
- God explicitly sanctioned only one high place for sacrifice: the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr 3:1). All other high places in the land had to be destroyed, a directive that was carried out only by King Josiah (2 Kings 22-23).
- "...I will destroy" - since Israel's religious leaders and priests would not destroy these "high places" for idol worship (except for King Josiah, Cf. 2 Kings 22-23), God will take it upon Himself to destroy them
- "...high places" - Rabbinic Judaism notices a progressive development in the use of these "high places" in Scripture
- In the *Torah*, they were exclusively altars for idol worship. However, beginning in 1 Sam 9:12-25, the Hebrew word for "high place" [*bamah*] also refers to locations where sacrifices to YHWH were made, both during times when such worship was allowed and later when it was prohibited.
- Until the Tabernacle was established, private altars were permitted and the sacrificial service was performed by the firstborn. But from the time that the Tabernacle was established, private altars were prohibited and the sacrificial service was performed by the priests.
- When the Jewish people arrived at Gilgal, private altars were permitted, but when they arrived at Shiloh, private altars were prohibited
- Consequently, it is understandable that God's wrath would be directed against these sites, since worship was to be held in the Tabernacle, and later, the Temple

4 So your altars will become deserted and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will make your slain fall in front of your idols.

4 So your altars will become desolate and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will make your slain fall in front of your idols.

4 Your altars will become desolate and your sun pillars will be shattered. I'll throw your slain down right in front of your idols.

4 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

- Verses 4-7 describe four results from the work of the "sword" (v3):

1. Idolatry will be eliminated ("your altars will become deserted and your incense altars will be smashed," v4a) and all the altars used for idolatrous practices would become desolate

- a. God would kill Israel's idolaters right in front of their idols, in the very act of them committing idolatry. This demonstrated that these idols were useless in protecting anyone during a calamity.
- b. This prophecy addresses a practice that became more popular shortly before the Babylonian Captivity: sun worship (2 Chr 34:4).
- c. This practice was widespread among Israel's neighboring nations, but was expressly forbidden for the Jewish people (Deut 4:19; 17:2-5)
- d. King Josiah's reforms included eliminating priests who sacrificed to the sun (2 Kings 23:11)
- e. Yet this did not stop the people from practicing this form of idolatry (Cf. 8:16), which took place at the very entrance (east side) of the temple, causing those involved to literally turn their backs on God.

2. Death of the idolaters in the presence of their idols ("I will make your slain fall in front of your idols," v4b; "I will also lay the dead bodies of the sons of Israel in front of their idols," v5a)

5 I will also lay the dead bodies of the sons of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars.

5 I will also lay the dead bodies of the sons of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars.

5 I'll place the corpses of the Israelis in front of their idols. I'll scatter your bones around your altar.

5 And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

3. God would scatter the bones of the idolaters around the altars ("I will scatter your bones around your altars")

- a. In OT times, bones scattered on what was considered a "holy place" was the most severe form of defilement (Cf. 2 Kings 23:14-16)

6 Everywhere you live, cities will be in ruins and the high places will be deserted, so that your altars will be in ruins and deserted, your idols will be broken and brought to an end, your incense altars will be cut down, and your works wiped out.

6 In all your dwellings, cities will become waste and the high places will be desolate, that your altars may become waste and desolate, your idols may be broken and brought to an end, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be blotted out.

6 In all the places where you live, the cities will be desolate. The high places will also be desolate so that your altars will be laid waste, bearing the punishment appropriate to them.

Your idols will be shattered, your sun pillars will be hewn down, and your works will be obliterated.

6 In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.

4. Devastation so widespread that it would extend to all of Judah's dwelling places ("Everywhere you live, cities will be in ruins and the high places will be deserted")
 - a. Cities throughout Israel would be laid waste and the high places would be desolate
 - b. God's purpose in all of this was to completely eliminate the works or traces of idolatry in the Land

7 The slain will fall among you, and you will know that **I am the LORD.**

7 The slain will fall among you, and you will know that I am the LORD.

7 The fatally wounded among you will fall, and at that time you'll know that I am the LORD.

7 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

- "...I am the LORD" - the four actions God would take against idolatry (v4-6) would the Jews with the experiential knowledge that this statement is true

— This phrase is used over 60x in Ezekiel as the motivation for God's actions

— His judgments on Judah were intended to prompt the Jews to recognize and acknowledge that He alone is God

The primary emphasis of v1-7 lies in the impending judgment designed to eradicate idolatry. When God executed His judgment on Judah, His people ended up in Babylon—the birthplace of idolatry. This strategic relocation ensured that they would be immersed in idolatrous practices to the extreme. The goal was that after 70 years of living in this condition, they would grow strongly opposed to any form of idolatry. History shows that God's plan succeeded. Following the Babylonian Captivity, with only a few exceptions, idolatry largely ceased to be a significant issue for the Jewish community. The judgment of the Babylonian Captivity played a crucial role in curing the Jews of idolatrous tendencies.

(b) Remnant spared (6:8-10)

8 "However, I will leave a **remnant**, in that you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries.

8 "However, I will leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries.

8 I'll leave a remnant among you—those who will escape the sword when I'll have scattered you throughout the earth.

8 Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

- "...remnant" - God, speaking here, reiterates that He will leave a remnant; this promise is repeated in 12:16; 14:22

— While God would be the One wielding the sword against His people, He would also ensure the escape of some to neighboring countries

9 Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be taken captive, how **I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts** which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which committed infidelity with their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations.

9 Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations.

9 Your survivors will remember me among the nations where they'll be taken captives. I've been crushed by their unfaithful hearts that have turned against me.

9 And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

- This verse reveals how the surviving remnant would respond (two ways):

- First, they would remember that the massive destruction by the Babylonians had been prophesied by both Jeremiah (in Judah) and Ezekiel (in exile). In the nations where they would be carried captive (primarily Egypt and Babylon), they would recall God's prophecies of divine judgment.
 - They would also remember the cause of the judgment: that their lewd ("whorish" [KJV]) hearts had grieved God
- Second, self-reproach (Cf. 20:43; 36:31). Upon realizing that their plight was a direct result of their idolatry, they would "loathe themselves in their own sight."
 - They would acknowledge their that transgressions, particularly idolatry, were abominations to the Lord

- "...I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts" - *nishvarti*, from the root *shavar*, meaning "to break in pieces"; God's heart was "broken to pieces" over the sins of His people.

10 Then they will know that **I am the LORD**; I have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them."

10 Then they will know that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them."

10 Then they'll know that I am the LORD. I didn't declare this evil that's intended for them without a reason."

10 And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

- "...I am the LORD" - third time in this chapter; remembering the cause of the judgment and the prophecies they were given, the remnant would finally acknowledge that God alone is YHWH, the Holy One of Israel

— They would also learn that God did not prophesy in vain; He meant what He said through His prophets

During the course of their captivity, they would renounce idolatrous practices once and for all (Cf. Zech 1:1-6). Historically, the destruction of Israel's idols came in two ways: by invading armies and by the Jewish people themselves. Typically, in ancient times, invading armies would enter a country and demolish all idols they encountered. This act symbolized the victorious strength of their own gods, leading to the destruction of high places, altars, and associated idols. Additionally, upon the return to the land after 70 years of captivity, a revival took place and all remaining idols were destroyed. God employed these methods to finally solve the issue of idolatry that had so grieved Him.

(c) Judgment against idolatry (6:11-14)

11 "This is what the Lord GOD says: '**Clap your hands, stamp your foot** and say, "Woe, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, which will fall by the sword, famine, and plague!"

11 "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Clap your hand, stamp your foot and say, "Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, which will fall by sword, famine and plague!"

11 This is what the Lord GOD says: "Clap your hands and stamp your feet! Say, 'Oh, no!' Because of all the detestable evil that has come from Israel's house, they'll fall by the sword, famine, and pestilence.

11 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

- "...Clap your hands, stamp your foot" - this act is used three different ways in Scripture, all in Ezekiel:

1. To express scornful delight (Cf. 25:6)

2. To serve as a sign of condemnation (Cf. 21:14-17)
3. To function as a sign of rejection (Cf. 22:13)

— It is likely that Ezekiel's actions here were intended to convey both scornful delight (#1) and condemnation (#2) of the Jewish people.

12 Anyone who is far away will die by the plague, anyone who is near will fall by the sword, and anyone who remains and is spared *from these* will die by the famine. So I will expend My wrath on them.

12 He who is far off will die by the plague, and he who is near will fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged will die by the famine. Thus will I spend My wrath on them.

12 The one who lives far away will die by pestilence and the one who is near will die violently. The survivors and their surveillance details will die by famine as I exhaust my rage against them.

12 He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.

- The three methods of judgment (sword, famine, plague in v11) are now applied:
- People who were far off would die of the pestilence. Those who were near would fall by the sword. Anyone who remained in Jerusalem would be besieged and die by the famine.
- The end result would be, judgment would be poured out on the Jewish people no matter where they were...in the land, out of the land, or in Jerusalem.

13 Then you will know that I am the LORD, when their dead are among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every leafy tree and under every massive oak with thick branches—the places where they offered a soothing aroma to all their idols.

13 Then you will know that I am the LORD, when their slain are among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every green tree and under every leafy oak—the places where they offered soothing aroma to all their idols.

13 "You'll learn that I am the LORD, when the fatally wounded will be among their idols, around their altars, on every hill, on top of the mountains, under every luxuriant tree, and under all the full-grown foliage—every place where they've offered fragrant aromas to all their idols.

13 Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.

- The prophesied events would come to pass, and people would witness the aftermath with dead men lying among demolished idols around the altars
- As they fled for their lives from the places of idolatry—"on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every leafy tree and under every massive oak with thick branches," they would be killed
- And the sight of corpses littering these idolatrous sites would be a stark reminder that Israel's idols were utterly useless to save anyone
- God's goal was two-fold: the gruesome scenes of the dead would cause the remnant to turn against idolatry, and to know that "I am the LORD"

14 So through all their dwelling places I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward **Diblah**; so they will know that I am the LORD."'"

14 So throughout all their habitations I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah; thus they will know that I am the LORD."'"

14 I'll stretch out my hands to strike them and send devastation to the land, from the wilderness of Diblah, throughout all their dwelling places. Then they'll know that I am the LORD."

14 So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

- The extent of the God's judgment on the land...
- "...Diblah" - uncertain location; the Masoretic Text suggests "Riblah" which is perhaps a better reading (Fruchtenbaum)
- According to 2 Kings 23:33, Riblah was a town on the northern border of Israel, thus this verse paints a picture of desolation extending from the south to the north
- This interpretation is consistent with the prophecy of Amos 6:14