

# **Ezekiel 12 - Ezekiel's "Exile" & "Famine" Sign-Acts; Two Parables of Prophecy and Fulfillment Timing; God Moves Judgment Earlier**

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

- (B) Shattering false securities (Ezek 12:1—19:14)
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## **Ezekiel 4-11**

Ezekiel's task had been to show the necessity of Jerusalem's judgment because of her disobedience. He had demonstrated the fact of the siege through a series of signs, and then he explained the reason for the siege through two messages and an extended vision.

## **Ezekiel 12-19**

While Ezek 8-11 dealt with God's judgment on the Temple, 12:1—19:14 deal with the judgment on the people. However, the people were still not ready to accept the fact of Jerusalem's fall. Therefore Ezekiel gave a new series of signs and messages that conveyed the inevitability of God's judgment. Any optimism was futile, Jerusalem's fate was sealed, there was no alternative solution. These messages were given in the 11-year interval

between the second and third (final) deportations. This section elaborates on 2 Chr 36:15-16:

15 Yet the LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; 16 but they *continually* mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against His people, until there was no remedy.

## Ezekiel 12

- (B) Shattering false securities (Ezek 12:1—19:14)
  - (a) First false security: Jerusalem remnant (12:1-20)
    - (i) First sign (12:1-16)
      - (a) Baggage and hole in the wall (12:1-7)

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

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

1 This message came to me from the LORD:

1 The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,

- This verse begins the third set of prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem...

- Ezekiel had finished the lengthy period of time lying on his right and left sides, so he was now allowed to rise from his bed to carry out further symbolic acts

- "...the word of the LORD came to me, saying" - Cf. 7:1; 11:14

2 "Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.

2 "Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.

2 "Son of Man, you live in a rebellious house that has eyes to see, but they can't see, and ears to hear, but they can't hear, since they're a rebellious house.

2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

- The reason for God having Ezekiel perform these symbolic acts is that the people were incapable of grasping spiritual truths

— Despite living in captivity in Babylon, the Jewish exiles remaining rebellious, always believing that they would be returning home soon

— So, Ezekiel had to resort to acting out his messages to them, like you would for children, because they were unable to understand. They had learned nothing from their experiences since going into exile five years earlier (597 BC)

- Israel's failure to perceive and comprehend spiritual truth was a recurring theme throughout the prophetic tradition. Moses foresaw this phenomenon in Deut 29:4. God spoke of it in Is 6:9-10; Jer 5:20-21.
- The problem continued into the NT, as evident in passages such as Matt 13:13-15; Mark 8:18; John 12:39-40 (quoting Is 6:10); and Acts 28:26-27 (quoting Is 6:9-10)
- It is interesting that Jewish critics of Messianic believers in Christ often highlight these passages to argue that the Gospels are anti-Semitic. In reality, these passages merely echo the complaints found in passages such as this in the OT.
- If the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are considered anti-Semitic, then, by the same token, the writings of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel could also be viewed as such, as they convey the same truths about Israel's spiritual blindness and deafness.
- The issue at hand is precisely this spiritual condition of the Jewish people because it has led them to reject the words of the prophets. This same spiritual condition persisted into the NT era, ultimately resulting in the failure to recognize Jesus as Messiah.

3 So as for you, son of man, **prepare for yourself baggage for exile** and go into exile by day **in their sight**; that is, **go into exile from your place to another place in their sight**.

Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house.

3 Therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself baggage for exile and go into exile by day in their sight; even go into exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand though they are a rebellious house.

3 "So now, Son of Man, you are to prepare your luggage for a trip into exile, and then you are to leave during the daytime so they see you leaving. Leave from your place to another while they're watching. Then perhaps they'll realize that they're a rebellious house.

3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

- Ezekiel now receives instructions from God about the next sign-act...
- "...prepare for yourself baggage for exile" - Ezekiel was to "pack his bags" as if he were being taken into exile
- Typically, exiles could only take a few essentials along with the clothes on their backs
- The exiles for whom Ezekiel was performing would immediately recognize the significance of his actions because they had gone through the same ordeal five years earlier (597 BC)
- "...go into exile from your place to another place" - Ezekiel was to exile himself to another place each day, then return, and do the same thing again that same evening (v4)
- The purpose of this reenactment was that maybe the exiles would consider Ezekiel's actions and reflect on its relevance to their own circumstances

- "...in their sight" [2x] - God mentioned this phrase 6x in His instructions (v3-6), emphasizing the necessity for the people to see what Ezekiel was doing with their own eyes

— God's reasoning is that the visual impact of the sign-act would be so striking that perhaps it would finally break through their thick skulls

4 Bring your baggage out by day in their sight, as baggage for exile. Then you shall go out at evening in their sight, as those who are going into exile.

4 Bring your baggage out by day in their sight, as baggage for exile. Then you will go out at evening in their sight, as those going into exile.

4 "Bring out your luggage, like you're packing to go into exile, and do this during the daytime while they're watching you. Later that evening, leave while they're watching you like someone heading into exile.

4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

In other words, this was symbolic to indicate they were going to be fleeing the city to try to avoid capture. He was trying to separate them from their complacency. They knew their city was under vassal rule, but they had the attitude that it was just temporary and things would get better. So they were not listening to the prophets, neither to Jeremiah nor Ezekiel.

5 Dig a hole through the wall in their sight and go out through it.

5 Dig a hole through the wall in their sight and go out through it.

5 While they continue to watch, dig a hole for yourself in the wall and enter through it.

5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

- Ezekiel was instructed to dig a hole in the wall of his house, while the people looked on

— After digging a hole in the wall, Ezekiel was to then carry out his belongings through it

6 Load *the baggage* on *your* shoulder in their sight and carry *it* out in the dark. You shall cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for **I have set you as a sign** to the house of Israel."

6 Load *the baggage* on *your* shoulder in their sight and carry *it* out in the dark. You shall cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have set you as a sign to the house of Israel."

6 "While they're watching, carry your luggage on your shoulder and go out in total darkness. Cover your face so that you won't see the land, because I'm using you as a sign to Israel's house."

6 In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.

- Ezekiel was further instructed to take his baggage and place them on his shoulder, in the sight of his fellow exiles. However, he had to wait until dark to carry his load.

- Ezekiel was further instructed that as he struggled to carry his luggage on his shoulder and crawl out of the house through the hole in the wall, he was to cover his face, preventing him from seeing the Land as he emerged.

— This act not only foreshadowed the imminent Babylonian exile of 586 BC but also portrayed the fate of King Zedekiah, who would be blinded and unable to see the land. The fulfillment of Ezekiel's sign-act is detailed in 2 Kings 25:4-7; Jer 52:7-11.

- "...I have set you as a sign" - Ezekiel's actions were intended to serve as a sign; what he portrayed symbolically would eventually happen literally to the entire nation of Judah

7 Then I did so, just as I had been commanded. By day I brought out my baggage like the baggage of an exile. Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands; I went out in the dark *and carried the baggage on my shoulder* in their sight.

7 I did so, as I had been commanded. By day I brought out my baggage like the baggage of an exile. Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands; I went out in the dark *and carried the baggage on my shoulder* in their sight.

7 I did just as I was commanded. I brought out the luggage as if it were luggage for exile. I did this during the day. Then in the evening I dug a hole in the wall with my hand and brought the luggage out in total darkness and carried it out on my shoulder while they were watching.

7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight.

- Ezekiel diligently performed the sign-acts as instructed by God, in the sight of the Jewish exiles

#### (b) Interpretation (12:8-16)

8 And in the morning the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

8 In the morning the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

8 The next morning, this message came to me from the LORD:

8 And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

- God's word arrived in the morning after Ezekiel performed the sign act; its intent was to provide an interpretation

9 "Son of man, has the house of Israel, the rebellious house, not said to you, 'What are you doing?'

9 "Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?'

9 "Son of Man, didn't the house of Israel, that rebellious house, ask you, 'What are you doing?'

9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?

- The exiles were genuinely intrigued by Ezekiel's unconventional behavior, prompting them to ask, 'What are you doing?'

10 Say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "This **pronouncement** concerns the **prince** in Jerusalem as well as all the house of Israel who are in it."

10 Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem as well as all the house of Israel who are in it."

10 Answer them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says, "This oracle concerns the prince of Jerusalem and the whole of Israel's house that is in their midst.'

10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them.

- "...pronouncement" - *massa*, means "utterance" or "oracle"; it appears 65x in the OT

— It denotes a message of great importance and gravity, often conveying judgment rather than comfort

- "...the prince" - Zedekiah; Jehoiachin was imprisoned in Babylon but was still alive (Cf. 1:2). Because he was the true king of Jerusalem, Ezekiel consistently refers to Zedekiah as "prince"

## Zedekiah

- Zedekiah was Judah's last king (599-588 BC); the youngest son of Josiah and Hamutal (Jer 1:3; 37:1) and brother to Jehoahaz (2 Kings 24:17-18; 23:31).
- He was 10 years old when his father died; 21 when he took over the throne
- Originally named Mattaniah, Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to Zedekiah when he deposed Zedekiah's nephew, Jehoiachin
  - This proves that Nebuchadnezzar treated his vassal kindly, allowing him to choose a new name and confirming it as a mark of his supremacy
  - Zedekiah is Hebrew: "Righteousness of YHWH"
  - This name was to be the pledge of his righteously keeping his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar who made him swear by God (Ezek 17:12-16; 2 Chr 36:13).

- Had Zedekiah kept his oath of fealty he would have been safe, though dependent. But weak, vacillating, and treacherous, he brought ruin on his country and on himself.
- It was through the anger of YHWH against Judah that Zedekiah was given up to his own rebellious devices, "stiffening his neck and hardening his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel" who warned him by Jeremiah; like Pharaoh of old, he would "not humble himself" (2 Chr 36:12-13; Jer 38:5; 39:1-7; 52:1-11; Cf. Jer 21; 24; 27-29; 32-34; 37-38).

11 Say, '**I am a sign to you.** Just as I have done, so it will be done to them; they will go into exile, into captivity.'

11 Say, 'I am a sign to you. As I have done, so it will be done to them; they will go into exile, into captivity.'

11 Tell them, 'I'm a sign for you. Just as I enacted it, it's going to happen to them. They'll go into exile and captivity.'

11 Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity.

- "...I am a sign to you" - Ezekiel, in what he does in the presence of the exiles, is expressing that which will soon come to pass in Jerusalem

— The point is that the Judahites would not travel to Babylon voluntarily, but forcibly as captives of Nebuchadnezzar

12 The prince who is among them will load *his baggage* on *his* shoulder in the dark and go out. They will dig a hole through the wall to bring *it* out through it. He will cover his face so that he cannot see the land with *his* eyes.

12 The prince who is among them will load *his baggage* on *his* shoulder in the dark and go out. They will dig a hole through the wall to bring *it* out. He will cover his face so that he can not see the land with *his* eyes.

12 Then the prince, who will be one of them, will carry his luggage<sup>6</sup> on his shoulder in the dark and will go out. They'll dig a hole in the wall for him to go through. His face will be covered so that he won't be able to see the land with his eyes.

12 And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes.

- Refers to what would happen to Zedekiah during the final Babylonian siege of Jerusalem  
 — Just like Ezekiel in the sign-act, Zedekiah would take a few belongings on his shoulder in the dark and dig through the wall. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Babylonians blocked the gates of Jerusalem, compelling Zedekiah to flee through a hole in the wall as the enemy breached the city to capture him.

- The prophecy also foresaw that Zedekiah would cover his face, preventing him from seeing the land of Babylon with his own eyes. This covering of the face symbolizes the blinding of Zedekiah. Following his capture in Riblah, the Babylonians executed his sons in front of his eyes. Then they blinded him and dragged him into captivity.
- So, the last thing Zedekiah witnessed was the slaughter of his own family. He was never able to see Babylon with his own eyes (2 Kings 25:4,7; Jer 39:4,7; 52:7,11).

13 I will also spread My net over him, and **he will be caught in My net**. And I will bring **him to Babylon** in the land of the Chaldeans; yet **he will not see it**, though he will die there.

13 I will also spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. And I will bring him to Babylon in the land of the Chaldeans; yet he will not see it, though he will die there.

13 But I'll throw my net over him. As a result, he'll be captured with my net, and with it I'll bring him to Babel, the land of the Chaldeans. He won't see it, though he'll die there.

13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

- Ezekiel now prophesies that the Babylonians would inflict three things on Zedekiah:

1. "...he will be caught in My net" - the Babylonians would capture him
  - a. The fulfillment of this prophecy is described in 2 Kings 25:5; Jer 39:5; 52:8
2. "...I will bring him to Babylon" - he would be taken captive in Babylon
  - a. The fulfillment of this prophecy is described in 2 Kings 25:7; Jer 39:7; 52:11
3. "...he will not see it" - blindness would be inflicted on Zedekiah

Josephus relates that Ezekiel sent this prophecy to Jerusalem, and that Zedekiah, finding an apparent discrepancy in the words of Ezekiel that he should not see Babylon, and those of Jeremiah, hardened himself in his rebellion (Jer 32:4; 34:3).

### **Josephus on Zedekiah**

[The following was excerpted from Josephus, Flavius; Whiston, William: *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987, S. 273.]

*Now Zedekiah was twenty-and-one years old when he took the government; and had the same mother with his brother Jehoiachin, but was a despiser of justice and of his duty, for truly those of the same age with him were wicked about him, and the whole multitude did what unjust and insolent things they pleased; — Flavius Josephus, Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 7.2 (§103)*

*...for which reason the prophet Jeremiah came often to him, and protested to him, and insisted, that he must leave off his impieties and transgressions, and take care of what*

*was right, and neither give ear to the rulers (among whom were wicked men) nor give credit to their false prophets who deluded them, as if the king of Babylon would make no more war against him, and as if the Egyptians would make war against him, and conquer him, since what they said was not true; and the events would not prove such [as they expected]. — (§104)*

*Now as to Zedekiah himself, while he heard the prophet speak, he believed him, and agreed to everything as true, and supposed it was for his advantage; but then his friends perverted him, and dissuaded him from what the prophet advised, and obliged him to do what they pleased. — (§105)*

*Ezekiel also foretold in Babylon what calamities were coming upon the people, which when he heard, he sent accounts of them unto Jerusalem; but Zedekiah did not believe their prophecies, for the reason following:—It happened that the two prophets agreed with one another in what they said as in all other things, that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive; but Ezekiel disagreed with him, and said, that Zedekiah should not see Babylon; while Jeremiah said to him, that the king of Babylon should carry him away thither in bonds; — (§106)*

*...and because they did not both say the same thing as to this circumstance, he disbelieved what they both appeared to agree in, and condemned them as not speaking truth therein, although all the things foretold him did come to pass according to their prophecies, as we shall show upon a fitter opportunity. — (§107)*

*Now the city was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah. They were indeed only generals of the king of Babylon, to whom Nebuchadnezzar committed the care of the siege, for he abode himself in the city of Riblah. The names of these generals who ravaged and subdued Jerusalem, if anyone desire to know them, were these: Nergal Sharezer, Sangar Nebo, Rabsaris, Sarsechim, and Rabmag; — *ibid* , Chapter 8.2. (§135)*

*...and when the city was taken about midnight, and the enemy's generals were entered into the temple, and when Zedekiah was sensible of it, he took his wives and his children, and his captains and friends, and with them fled out of the city, through the fortified ditch, and through the desert; — (§136)*

*...and when certain of the deserters had informed the Babylonians of this, at break of day, they made haste to pursue after Zedekiah, and overtook him not far from Jericho, and encompassed him about. But for those friends and captains of Zedekiah who had fled out of the city with him, when they saw their enemies near them, they left him and dispersed themselves, some one way and some another, and every one resolved to save himself; — (§137)*

*...so the enemy took Zedekiah alive, when he was deserted by all but a few, with his children and his wives, and brought him to the king. When he was come,*

*Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch, and covenant-breaker, and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him. — (§138)*

*He also reproached him for his ingratitude, that when he had received the kingdom from him, who had taken it from Jehoiachin, and given it him, he had made use of the power he gave him against him that gave it: "but," said he, "God is great, who hateth that conduct of thine, and hath brought thee under us." — (§139)*

*And when he had used these words to Zedekiah, he commanded his sons and his friends to be slain, while Zedekiah and the rest of the captains looked on; after which he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him, and carried him to Babylon. — (§140) And these things happened to him, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold to him, that he should be caught, and brought before the king of Babylon, and should speak to him face to face, and should see his eyes with his own eyes; and thus far did Jeremiah prophesy. But he was also made blind, and brought to Babylon but did not see it, according to the prediction of Ezekiel. — (§141)*

Cf. 2 Kings 25:4-7; Jer 52:8,11. The further significance of the covered face (Ezek 12:12) is found in the fact that Zedekiah was blinded at Riblah by Nebuchadnezzar's orders, and from that time could not see the ground on which he walked.

### **The Siege**

The terrible siege soon followed (Jer 38:9) so that mothers boiled and ate the flesh of their own infants (Lam 4:5,8,10) and the visage of their nobles was blacker than coal, their skin clave to their bones and became withered.

*On the 9thday of the 4thmonth in the middle of July after a year and a half's siege (from the 10thmonth of the 9thyear to the 4thmonth of the 11th year of Zedekiah) about midnight a breach was made in the wall. — Josephus*

The Babylonian princes took their seats in state in the middle gate, between the upper and the lower city. Zedekiah fled in the opposite direction, namely, southwards, with muffled face to escape recognition, and like one digging through a wall to escape, between the two walls on the E and W sides of the Tyropoeon valley, by a street issuing at the gate above the royal gardens and the fountain of Siloam.

Zedekiah was overtaken in the plains of Jericho. He was taken for judgment to Riblah at the upper end of Lebanon; there Nebuchadnezzar first killed his sons before his eyes, then caused the eyes of Zedekiah to be "dug out" (Jer 39; 52:4-11). Thus were fulfilled the ostensibly inconsistent prophecies. *On deeper search, apparent discrepancies in Scripture prove to be hidden harmonies.*

God is literal. He places His Word even above His Name (Ps 138:2). When Daniel read Jeremiah who spoke of the 70 years of captivity, Daniel took Jeremiah literally, not

allegorically or figuratively. Every time Jesus quoted from the OT, he applied it literally (Matt 5:17). Every time you see the Word of God applied by another servant of God in the Scripture, you will notice that it is always literal.

### A Contrast

Zedekiah was a deceptive, wicked fellow, and had broken his treaty with Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king, was more honorable than the man on Israel's throne. Zedekiah, for breaking his oath of allegiance, was blinded and died in captivity in Babylon (Cf. 17:1-21).

14 And I will scatter to every wind all who are around **him**, his helpers and all his troops; and I will draw out a sword after them.

14 I will scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will draw out a sword after them.

14 I'll scatter every attendant who surrounds him, along with his entire army, to every wind. When I unsheathe my sword to pursue them,

14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

- The focus now turns to all the house of Israel...

- First, in the final siege, the people would be scattered

- "...him" - Zedekiah

15 So **they will know that I am the LORD**, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries.

15 So they will know that I am the LORD when I scatter them among the nations and spread them among the countries.

15 they'll learn that I am the LORD, when I've dispersed them among the nations and scattered them throughout the earth."'"

15 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

- Zedekiah's military forces, and those who tried to help him escape, would be scattered among the nations

- "...they will know that I am the LORD" - when the Judahites found themselves scattered along the nations, in fulfillment of both Ezekiel's and Jeremiah's prophecies, they will understand who initiated the judgment

### The Purpose of the Surviving Remnant

16 But I will spare a few of them from the sword, the famine, and plague so that they may tell of all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the LORD."

16 But I will spare a few of them from the sword, the famine and the pestilence that they may tell all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the LORD."

16 "But I'll preserve a few people out of the violent death, famine, and pestilence, so they can recount their detestable practices among the nations when they'll go there. Then they'll know that I am the LORD."

16 But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

- A few of Zedekiah's men would survive the Babylonian siege and the executions at Riblah
- God would spare them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence so that they could spread the truth about the reasons for this judgment among the nations
- When they told the story and acknowledged their abominations, the Jewish people far and wide would understand the nature of God more deeply

(ii) Second sign (12:17-20)

(a) Trembling while eating and drinking (12:17-18)

17 Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

17 Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me saying,

17 This message came to me from the LORD:

17 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

- After explaining the sign-act in relation to Zedekiah and the rest of the Judahites, Ezekiel now receives a new instruction to perform another sign-act...

18 "Son of man, eat your bread with trembling, and drink your water with quivering and anxiety.

18 "Son of man, eat your bread with trembling and drink your water with quivering and anxiety.

18 "Son of Man, eat your bread with trembling and drink your water with quivering and anxiety.

18 Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;

- Ezekiel was to eat bread and drink water with a sense of worry and anxiety

(b) Interpretation (12:19-20)

19 Then say to **the people of the land**, 'This is what the Lord GOD says concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: "They will eat their bread with anxiety and drink their water with horror, because their land will be stripped of its fullness on account of the violence of all who live in it.

19 Then say to the people of the land, 'Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel, "They will eat their bread with anxiety and drink their water with horror, because their land will be stripped of its fullness on account of the violence of all who live in it.

19 Then tell the people of the land, 'This is what the LORD says to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to Israel's land: "They'll eat their food in anxiety and drink their water in trepidation, because their land will be desolate in its entirety due to all the violence committed by all who live in it.

19 And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

- "...the people of the land" - the objects of this prophetic sign-act were the people in the Land, both the city of Jerusalem and all the land of Israel

— This sign-act was designed to frighten and warn the inhabitants of a coming famine, a complete desolation of the Land, stripped of everything. This famine would then bring about "anxiety" and "horror."

— The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in 2 Kings 25:3; Jer 52:6

- God reiterated that this famine would come about because of the terrible violence He had found in the Land

- The Jews in exile in Babylon thought themselves miserable as being exiles and envied the Jews left in Jerusalem as fortunate

— Far from being fortunate, the Jews in the Land were truly miserable, for the worst is before them, whereas the exiles have escaped the miseries of the coming siege

20 The **inhabited cities will be in ruins**, and **the land will be a desolation**. So **you will know that I am the LORD.**""

20 The inhabited cities will be laid waste and the land will be a desolation. So you will know that I am the LORD."""

20 The towns that are inhabited will lie in ruins, because the land will be devastated. Then they'll learn that I am the LORD."""

20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

- Three results:

1. "...inhabited cities will be in ruins"
2. "...the land will be a desolation"
3. "...[the people] will know that I am the LORD"

- (b) Second false security: parables (12:21-28)
  - (i) First parable (12:21-25)
    - (a) Prophecies come to nothing (12:21-22)

**21** Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**21** Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**21** Later, this message came to me from the LORD:

**21** And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

- It appears that the exiles looked at the first sign-act dismissively, so God once again revealed Himself to Ezekiel in a word...

**22** "Son of man, what is this proverb you *people* have about the land of Israel, saying, '**The days are long, and every vision fails**'?

**22** "Son of man, what is this proverb you *people* have concerning the land of Israel, saying, 'The days are long and every vision fails'?

**22** "Son of Man, what's this proverb you have concerning Israel's land that says, 'The days pass slowly and every vision ends in nothing'?

**22** Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?

- "...The days are long, and every vision fails" - the people evidently outright denied the validity and truthfulness of the prophetic word

— The people perceived the delay in fulfillment as a sign that the prophecies would never materialize. In other words, they did not believe Ezekiel because of unfulfilled prophecy.

### **The Coming Surprise**

It shall again be the characteristic of the last times, when "faith" shall be regarded as an antiquated thing, seeing that it remains stationary (Luke 18:8), whereas worldly arts and sciences progress, and when the "continuance of all things from creation" will be an argument against the possibility of their being suddenly brought to a standstill by the Coming of the Lord (Is 66:5; 2 Peter 3:3-4). The very long-suffering of God, which ought to lead men to repentance, is made an argument against His Word (Eccl 8:11; Amos 6:3).

- (b) Lord's response (12:23-25)

**23** Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "I will put an end to this proverb so that they will no longer use it as a proverb in Israel." But tell them, "**The days**

**are approaching as well as the fulfillment of every vision.**

23 Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "I will make this proverb cease so that they will no longer use it as a proverb in Israel." But tell them, "The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision.

23 Therefore you are to tell them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says, "I'm about to put an end to use of this proverb in Israel. It will never be used again as a proverb in Israel. Instead, tell them that the days are drawing near when every vision will be fulfilled.

23 Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

- God addressed this objection by reaffirming the certainty of every single one of His judgments

— God instructed Ezekiel, because of this proverb, that they would no longer be able to use it because all of His prophecies would be fulfilled

- "...The days are approaching as well as the fulfillment of every vision" - Ezekiel was to give them a new proverb, from God Himself

24 For there will no longer be any **false vision or deceptive divination** within the house of Israel.

24 For there will no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.

24 There will no longer be worthless visions and flattering divinations in the midst of Israel's house.

24 For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

- "...false vision or deceptive divination" - these will be described in more detail in Ezek 13

25 For **I the LORD** will speak whatever word I speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for **in your days**, you rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it," declares the Lord GOD."

25 For I the LORD will speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it," declares the Lord GOD."

25 Because I am the LORD, I'll speak and the message that I communicate will be accomplished without delay. While you continue to be a rebellious house, I'll speak the message and then fulfill it," declares the Lord GOD."

25 For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and

will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

- "...I the LORD" - when God uses His name in this manner, it emphasizes that He is the Covenant-Keeper
- He promised to carry out every prophetic word spoken, covering both near and distant prophecies in Ezekiel
- With the exception of a brief glimpse into Israel's distant future, all prophecies so far have pertained to Judah's immediate future. The fulfillment of these prophecies would no longer be deferred or delayed.
- "...in your days" - in that particular generation living at that time, these prophecies would come to fruition
- God Himself would "speak the word" and "perform (fulfill) it"

(ii) Second parable (12:26–28)

(a) Prophecies will not be immediately fulfilled (12:26-27)

**26** Furthermore, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**26** Furthermore, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**26** Later, this message came to me from the LORD:

**26** Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

27 "Son of man, behold, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many years *from now*, and he prophesies of times far off.'

27 "Son of man, behold, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many years *from now*, and he prophesies of times far off.'

27 "Son of Man, pay attention! The house of Israel keeps on saying, 'The vision that he's talking about concerns the distant future. He's prophesying concerning times that are far in the future!'

27 Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.

- The first proverb attacked by Ezekiel expressed the people's doubts about the *fact* of God's judgment. The second proverb expressed their doubts about the *imminency* of God's judgment.

— The people finally bought into the fact that God's judgment, as prophesied, would be carried out. What they now didn't believe was that it was going to be in their lifetime.

— Essentially the people said, 'Oh sure, Ezekiel's prophecies will be fulfilled—just not anytime soon, but far beyond our years, so we don't have to be too concerned about them today.'

(b) Lord's response (12:28)

28 Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed,"'" declares the Lord GOD.

28 Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed,"'" declares the Lord GOD.

28 Therefore tell them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says, "None of my messages will be delayed any longer. Any message that I speak will be fulfilled," declares the Lord GOD."

28 Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

- God's response was, 'Ok, if that's what you think, I'm going to move up My timeline to NOW! Fulfillment of these prophecies was imminent, and God would make sure to perform every word spoken.