

THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM PREDICTED

Ezekiel chapter 4 through 7:27 cover about a years worth of prophecies dealing with the final siege and destruction of Jerusalem all given before it actually happens by the Babylonians from 588-586 B.C..

MAJOR DIVISIONS OF EZEKIEL

Chapters 1-3 -	EZEKIELS CALL
Chapters 4-24 -	WARNINGS OF THE IMPENDING DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (given before the siege)
Chapters 25-32 -	JUDGEMENT OF THE NATIONS (given during the siege)
Chapter 33 -	RECOMMISSION OF EZEKIEL AND A FRESH CALL TO REPENTANCE
Chapters 34-48 -	THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

As instructed by God, Ezekiel goes through a series of teaching methods to communicate the Word of the Lord:

Chapters 4-5 = Signs Chapters 6-7 = Sermons Chapters 8-11 = Visions

All carried the emphasis of sin, unrepentance and its consequence. Although Ezekiel is unique as to the extent of the bizarre nature of what he acts out he is not alone in the use of symbology to communicate Gods message (Ahijah - 1Ki 18; Isaiah - 8;20; Jeremiah - 13; 14; 18; 19; 27; 28; 34; 35; 43; 51).

4:1-3 *“Now you son of man, get yourself a brick, place it before you and inscribe a city on it, Jerusalem. Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise up a ramp, pitch camps and place battering rams against it all around. Then get yourself an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel.”*

God instructs Ezekiel to basically build a sort of sand box diorama of Jerusalem with its wall. Probably performed in public sight, Ezekiel, like a kid, acts out the prophecy of God gives. A “siege wall” would be similar to a wheeled watchtower that would be high enough for soldiers to get over the wall. The enactment also portrays the use of ramps and battering rams to penetrate the wall surrounding the city. The camps pitched around describe the large number of soldiers in the Babylonian army that would carry out the devastation of the city.



EZEKIEL

“Strengthened by God”

Session 4 - Ezekiel 4&5

4:4-8 *“As for you, lie down on your left side and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; you shall bear their iniquity for the number of days that you lie on it. For I have assigned you a number of days corresponding to the years of their iniquity, three hundred and ninety days; thus you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah; I have assigned it to you for forty days, a day for each year. Then you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared and prophesy against it. Now behold, I will put ropes on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege.”*

While he was laying on his left side Ezekiel was facing north indicating the northern house of Israel for which God had him act out the 390 years worth of their rebellion. In the same fashion he would lie on his right side facing south indicating the house of Judah and for 40 days. Most scholars believe that this was not taking place all day rather at a certain point each day probably during a significant time period each day in order to cause people to notice. He could not have carried out some of the other assignments God gave him if he were on his side the entire day.

430 YEARS?

The text says that the days (a day for a year) are linked to the sin of Israel and Judah. There are many views held by scholars concerning the numbers given. These views focus either on the accumulation of sin by both the northern and southern kingdoms, on the number of days of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem or finally the days are often linked to some future period of time of judgement. All of these views fail to make a precise link to the actual days / years stated.

There are two events in Israel's past that the symbology of the days would have made the Israelites recall:

40 years = In Numbers 14:14 it says “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year shall ye bear your iniquities;”. The Israelites were subjected to 40 years of wilderness wandering as a result of their doubting the faithfulness of God.

390 years = earlier prophecies in Deuteronomy 28:68; Hosea 8:13; Hosea 9:3; Hosea 11:5 declare that the people in punishment for their sins should be brought again into Egypt. This clearly is meant to be like the Egyptian captivity and not literally as captives of Egypt again. The meaning is plainly that they should endure sufferings corresponding to the Egyptian bondage, but in another locality.

The text begins with Ezekiel publicly acting out the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Then Ezekiel acts out the sin of Israel and Judah both of which are linked to two distinct times of judgement and enslavement in Israel's past. As long as Jerusalem still stood, the Jews would believe that the false prophets were

correct in their false proclamations. But then as Ezekiel goes from a vivid picture of the siege of Jerusalem to an illustration of Israel’s sin, he then is told to bare his arm, or “roll up his sleeve” to indicate the work of a soldier as he faces Jerusalem. As he does so the Lord has him wear ropes at the same time to show that the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be able to avoid the total destruction of the city.

This main point is further demonstrated by the eating of defiled bread and famine type symbolism that Ezekiel is called to act out next.

DEFILED BREAD

4:9-13 *“But as for you, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, put them in one vessel and make them into bread for yourself; you shall eat it according to the number of the days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days. Your food which you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; you shall eat it from time to time. The water you drink shall be the sixth part of a hin by measure; you shall drink it from time to time. You shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked it in their sight over human dung. Then the LORD said, “Thus will the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will banish them.”*

The weights and measures given were indicative of a famine and the limited amounts of consumption would further point to food and water scarcity. The food weight was 8 ounces per day and the water was a pint and half per day. The type of ingredients used point to a hardly nutritious poor mans rations. The book of Lamentations describes these conditions in great detail.

While the Lord was not instructing Ezekiel to use human dung as an ingredient, human dung used as the fuel to bake the bread would be seen as a totally defiling act (Duet 14:3; 23:12-14; Lev 5:3; 7:21). Bread was normally baked on hot stones (1Ki 19:6).

4:14-17 *“But I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth. Then He said to me, “See, I will give you cow’s dung in place of human dung over which you will prepare your bread.” Moreover, He said to me, “Son of man, behold, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they will eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and drink water by measure and in horror, because bread and water will be scarce; and they will be appalled with one another and waste away in their iniquity.”*

Ezekiel would have been particularly familiar with the dietary laws that God gave to the Jews as a priest and like Daniel had been truly faithful to the laws of God. Although God permits Ezekiel to use a lesser form of defilement, it none the less carries with it the image of the defilement of Gentile practice. Notice that as they endure these famine conditions they will still be wasting away in their iniquity. It takes nothing less than the hand of the Lord to move the heart of man to repentance.

THE DESOLATION OF JERUSALEM

5:1-4 *“As for you, son of man, take a sharp sword; take and use it as a barber’s razor on your head and beard. Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair. One third you shall burn in the fire at the center of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. Then you shall take one third and strike it with the sword all around the city, and one third you shall scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. Take also a few in number from them and bind them in the edges of your robes. Take again some of them and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel.”*

Shaving the head would be another symbol of humiliation to the Jews. It also painted the picture of Israel being severed from Jerusalem and their land. It was a sign of deep mourning (Job 1; Isa 22; Jer 7). There is illustrated here three distinct ways the inhabitants of Jerusalem would suffer and even perish.

One third to be burned – Ezekiel was instructed to place one third of his shaved hair in the center of his diorama and set it on fire painting the picture of severe famine and plague.

One third cut up by his sword – Ezekiel was instructed to place one third of his shaved hair around the walls of the city on his diorama and cut it up. This was to show that another third would die by the sword in slaughter.

One third scattered to the wind – This scattered third would symbolize the scattered exiles into surrounding lands.

Interestingly though a few were reserved for Ezekiel to tuck into the hem of his robe. This would carry with it the idea of the preserved remnant that God has always been faithful to keep.

5:5-8 *“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her. ‘But she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations and against My statutes more than the lands which surround her; for they have rejected My ordinances and have not walked in My statutes.’ Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have more turmoil than the nations which surround you and have not walked in My statutes, nor observed My ordinances, nor observed the ordinances of the nations which surround you’, therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I, even I, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations.’”*

While we are looking at a time of extreme judgement God is bringing upon Israel it is important to note how He views her prominence. She is depicted as at the center of the nations. How did Israel rebel more wickedly than the nations? Israel is God’s chosen nation and is the only nation which God handed down His ordinances. They were to be His ambassadors to the other nations and instead they pursued idol worship and wickedness beyond that of the pagan nations.

Notice how it is said by the Lord that they did not observe the ordinances of the nations which surround

her. Remember that the warning of Jeremiah was to accept what God had allowed to come upon them as a form of discipline and to not rebel. Yet encouraged by the many false prophets in Jerusalem, the kings refused to heed Jeremiah’s warnings and in pride kept attempting to launch campaigns against Babylon. The kings were trusted as vassal kings and instead were two-faced in their pledges to Nebuchadnezzar.

5:9 *“And because of all your abominations, I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again.”*

This statement must be considered to include the future time of Jacobs trouble that Jesus referenced (Matt 24:21) for Israel from Daniel.

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

Dan 12:1-3 (NASB)

All of her abominations will include the rejection of their Messiah and the embrace of the one who comes in his own name.

5:10 *“Therefore, fathers will eat their sons among you, and sons will eat their fathers; for I will execute judgments on you and scatter all your remnant to every wind.”*

As unbelievable as this is, the book of Lamentations actually describes this horrific scene as extreme circumstances overtake the reservations that humanity would normally have (Lam 2:20; 4:10). These extremes were predicted by Moses (Deut 28:52-57). Again we see a near far reference to the scattering of the remnant after the siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the diaspora that took place after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. which indeed scattered the remnant to the nations.

5:11-12 *“‘So as I live,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare. ‘One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them.’”*

The details of the Lord “withdrawing” are shown in chapter 8 depicted in the glory of the Lord departing from Israel. The judgement of the thirds is not limited to the Babylonian siege. It happened to the Jews during the Nazi holocaust where about a third of Jews died and Jeremiah records what will happen in the future during the time of Jacobs trouble (Jer 13:8,9).

5:13-17 *“Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them. Moreover, I will make you a desolation and a reproach among the nations which surround you, in the sight of all who pass by. So it will be a reproach, a reviling, a warning and an object of horror to the nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath and raging rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken. When I send against them the deadly arrows of famine which were for the destruction of those whom I will send to destroy you, then I will also intensify the famine upon you and break the staff of bread. Moreover, I will send on you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you of children; plague and bloodshed also will pass through you, and I will bring the sword on you. I, the LORD, have spoken.”*

The four acts of judgement are famine, evil beasts, pestilence and sword. These same judgements appear in 14:20 and in Lev 26:22-26; Deut 32:24, 25; Rev 6:7,8.

God has always kept for Himself a remnant and that is true of Israel even under the most harsh times of judgement. In Jeremiah 23:3 the remnant of Israel is gathered from the nations, not just Babylon. The remnant is necessary for God’s purposes to restore Israel to their land. Consider what Isaiah has to say about the future promised final restoration of Israel:

“Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”
Is 11: 10-12 (NASB)

The first regathering came from the land of Babylon, from one country. The second regathering began on May 14, 1948 and will reach it’s fulfillment when Jesus comes to reign with His saints and delivers the final victory to Israel over her enemies. It is both in the utter devastation of Israel and in her restoration that Gods purpose to make His name known to all the nations is carried out.