

LONG OUTLINE ON EZEKIEL CHAPTER 12—The Last Call—Part A, vss. 1 – 10

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1. Review
 - a) Very short historical prelude:
 - i) Date: 593 – 571 B.C.
 - ii) Audience: Exiles from Judah in Babylonia
 - iii) Milieu: Gross idolatry and systemic religious and societal corruption.
 - iv) Exile has/will come w/ destruction
 - b) The “hammer blows” of judgement (sword, famine, pestilence) that Elaine mentioned in chapters 4 & 5 are continued in chapters 6 and in 7.
 - i) Three judgements: *sword, famine, pestilence*
 - ii) Israel to become a *reproach, a reviling, a warning*
 - c) Chapter 8: Ezekiel visits Jerusalem and sees the abomination in the temple and in the court of the temple.
 - d) Chapter 9: Marking those protected from destruction
 - i) Man w/ a pen marks to be saved from destruction the ones that “sigh and groan over all the abominations in their midst.”
 - ii) The rest—men, women, young, old—are destined for slaughter. (Remember: Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel have told the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go to Babylon.)
 - e) Chapter 10: The glory of the Lord leaves Jerusalem
 - f) Chapter 11: Judgement, restoration, final departure of God’s glory from the temple
 - i) Vss. 1 – 13: Evil rulers judged. Mainly false prophets giving evil advice that all will be well.
 - ii) Vss. 14 – 21: But God will restore as well as destroy. He will keep a remnant
 - iii) Vss. 22, 23: Final departure of the glory of God at the top of the Mt. of Olives.
 - g) TWO FINAL POINTS:
 - i) Israel that was to be a light to the nations (Is 42.6; 49.6) now becomes a lesson to the nations about what happens when God’s rules are disobeyed.
 - ii) Note Lev 26 and Dt 28.15 – 68 for God’s judgement for not keeping the covenant.
2. Introduction to Chapter 12—Three oracles:
 - a) Vss. 1 –16: Object lesson pointing the certainty of the exile
 - b) Vss. 17 – 20: Fear and trembling upon those that refuse to go into exile
 - c) Vss. 21 – 28: Message against the cynics that doubt the reality of Ezekiel’s prophecies

1. Verse 1: "The word of the Lord came to me, saying ..."
 - a) Ezekiel is back in Babylon .
 - b) Same formulation of his calling as before (five times in this chapter: vss. 1, 8, 17, 21, 26)
 - c) Emphasis that Ezekiel is not speaking of his own accord
2. Verse 2: Rebellious, sightless, deaf people
 - a) They have eyes but do not see and ears but do not hear. (Where have we seen this before?)
 - i) Ezekiel is repeating a constant theme from the prophets that preceded him (Cp. Is 6.9, 10; Is 43.8; Jer 5.21)
 - ii) Ps 135.15 – 18, esp. vs. 18, relates well what is going on (Cp. Ps 115.5 – 7):

¹⁵ The idols of the nations are *nothing but* silver and gold,
The work of human hands.

¹⁶ They have mouths, but they do not speak;
They have eyes, but they do not see;

¹⁷ They have ears, but they do not hear,
Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.

¹⁸ **Those who make them will become like them,
Yes, everyone who trusts in them.**

- b) several points:
 - i) The people were so involved w/ idolatry that they became like their idols.
 - (1) We become what we value. If we value money, we become greedy; if we value power, we become tyrannical; if we value looks, we become vain.
 - (2) Important verses:
 - (a) Prov 4.23: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."
 - (b) Mt 6.21: "... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
 - ii) Note that the people were blind and deaf because of rebellion—not the opposite way around. That is, they are not rebellious because they are blind and deaf.
 - iii) And what was the rebelliousness? The thought that the exiles would return soon to Judah and to Jerusalem. I.e., they did not believe Ezekiel, the true messenger of God as opposed to the false prophets w/ a more pleasing message. (More later.)
 - iv) Are there aspects of our life for which we are blind and deaf because we do not want to follow God's instruction? ("That's just the way I am." "Everybody is doing it." "It's not a MAJOR sin." "I can't believe God wants me to follow him that

closely." "C'mon man—religion is religion and politics is politics, and God understands the difference."

- v) We get the idea: rebelliousness led the people to discount the seriousness of God's word.

Verses 3 – 16: The object lesson:

3. Verse 3: Prepare for exile
 - a) Prepare a bag (probably from animal skin) for exile. Note that Ezekiel already did this for himself in the first wave of exiles in 597 B.C. This is *dējā vu* for Ezekiel.
 - b) There is hope that the people may be persuaded this time to believe Ezekiel
 - c) Although he is in Babylon, his sign-act is as though he's back in Jerusalem
 - d) What does he carry? Some food, a cup, water, and a mat
 - e) Do this in their sight (Lit. *to their eyes*, used twice in this verse and seven times in vss. 3 – 7.) Note the play on "eyes." They will "see" what Ezekiel does ("to their eyes") yet they will not understand the import of his action for their eyes do not see!
 - f) The emphasis is that there will be more exiles from Jerusalem and from Judah to Babylon, and not the other way around as announced by the false prophets.
4. Verse 4: Commencing the object lesson
 - a) "In their sight"; Lit. "to their eyes"; used twice in this verse
 - b) "Bring out the baggage by day ... pick it up in the evening": probably to give the people enough time to gather around to see what Ezekiel was up to this time.
5. Verse 5 Dig a hole thru the wall
 - a) Most likely his house wall; maybe a courtyard wall. Not the city wall. (The word for a city wall is different)
 - b) Ezekiel leaves the bag outside—probably to grab the people's attention during the day.
 - c) Ezekiel digs a hole in the wall in the sight of the people.
 - i) The first time Ezekiel is asked to dig a hole in a wall was in 8.7 – 10. Ezekiel was to dig a hole into the temple to see the abominations there.
 - ii) Here, if he is in sight of the people, he may be digging from the outside in, which would imply he is taking the role of the invaders, intimating the breaches in the city wall during the siege of Jerusalem.
 - iii) If he is digging from the inside out (but would this be in the sight of the people?), then he is taking the role of the exiles that are trying to sneak out of Jerusalem thru the breaches in the city wall.
 - iv) Did Ezekiel bring the bag back into his house and leave thru the wall w/ his bag, or did he leave it outside and pick it up as he climbed thru the wall? Unclear.

- v) Amos 4.3 re: the northern tribe's exile: "You will go out through holes in the walls, one in front of the other, and you will be hurled to Harmon," declares the Lord."
- d) Verse 6a: Carry out the bag in the dark.
 - i) Doing this in the dark is a sign of darkness to come.
 - ii) The word for "darkness" [Heb. *a/atah*] is used here and in verses 7 and 12.
 - iii) The only other place is Gen 15.17 in connection w/ the covenant God made w/ Abraham w/ the split animals.
 - (1) Gen 15.17: "Now it came about, when the sun had set, that it was very dark [*a/atah*].
 - (2) In short, a very fearful, foreboding darkness, like what was to come over the land of Judah.
 - iv) Verse 6b: Cover your face so you will not see the land.
 - (1) Premonition of vs. 13 re: Zedekiah?
 - (2) Shame? Grief?
 - (3) Maybe cannot bear to see what he is leaving behind
 - (4) Most likely a sign that those going into exile will never again see the land of Judah or Jerusalem
- 6. Verse 7: Ezekiel carries out his sign-action.
- 7. Verse 8: The word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel a second time.
- 8. Verse 9: The people are expressing curiosity for what Ezekiel has done
 - a) This is the first time the crowd inquires of Ezekiel what he is doing. Other enactments seem to be answered w/ "Like, whatever."
 - b) The question, "What are you doing?" again shows lack of understanding although they see.
 - c) As before, they do not "see" because of their rebellion.
- 9. Verse 10: Beginning of the explanation
 - a) Complicated Hebrew:
 - i) Usual translation: "Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God, "This burden [Heb. *massa*] concerns the prince (or "leader") [Heb. *nasi*] in Jerusalem as well as all the house of Israel who are in it." (Lit. "in them," implying the midst of Jerusalem and Israel. I.e., all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Judah.)
 - ii) Note the word "prince" (*nasi*) instead of "king." (Perhaps an indication that Ezekiel is not fond of Zedekiah's leadership.)
 - iii) Although *massa* can mean "oracle," Ezekiel does not use that term as such. (Cf. Ezek 24.25 where it means "'burden, load." *massa* refers "to that which weighs them [the people] down emotionally and is a constant source of concern or worry (NET note 36 on this verse).

- iv) As such, rather than an "oracle" (*massa*) against the "prince" (*nasi*), this is better translated as [IMHO] "... **the burden (*massa*) [is] the prince (*nasi*)** of Jerusalem." In other words, the prince (*nasi*) is one of the rebellious leaders that refuses to heed God's word, and the people are following his lead.
- v) Play on words *massa* and *nasi*, for they have the same root in Heb.
- b) EXAMPLES of leaders being a burden?