

Ezekiel Notes

Chapters 11-12

4. The condemnation of Jerusalem's leaders ch. 11

11:1-4. Ezekiel's last movement was back in 9:16 where the Spirit of God had brought him into the "inner court" of the Lord's house (cf. 3:8, 14; 11:24; 37:1; 43:5). The Spirit now lifted the prophet and took him to the gate facing east toward the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives. There at the entrance of the gate were 25 men, but not the same ones that were worshipping the sun earlier (8:16). They included "Jaazaniah, son of Assur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people" (11:1). "The gate was the traditional place where the elders of a city sat to administer justice and oversee legal matters. It was a city's "courthouse" (cf. Gen. 23:10, 18; Deut. 21:19; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:1-2, 9, 11; Job 29:7, 14-17)."¹ And, as leaders, the Spirit said they, "devise iniquity and give evil advice in this city." In fact, the Spirit gives a summary of their advice: "Is not the time near to build houses? This city is the pot and we are the flesh (security)." The Spirit will give us more information about this statement by the leaders in the prophecy Ezekiel is about to proclaim. But Dyer writes, "11:6-12. Ezekiel then altered the elders' imagery of the meat and the pot. Those righteous men who had been murdered in the city (**you have killed many people in this city**) had been Jerusalem's hope for only they could have rescued the city. The elders thought they were safe as meat in a pot (v. 3). But the slain righteous were the "meat": **the bodies you have thrown there** (in the **streets**, v. 6) **are the meat and this city is the pot**. Though the elders felt secure within the "pot" of Jerusalem, God would **drive them out** and give them **over to foreigners**. Instead of the **city** being a **pot** of safety with the people in it being "safe" like **meat** (v. 11) the city would be smashed and the people dragged away."²

11:5-13. As mentioned before, the phrase "the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me" gives the idea of the Spirit coming on Ezekiel and strengthening him to do what God is calling him to do." God does the same for us when He calls us to do hard things in ministry. God wanted these evil leaders to be aware that not only does He see them (compare 9:9 to 10:12) but he also "knows their [every] thoughts." He knows that they have filled the streets with the slain through the "iniquity they devised and the evil advice" they had given to the people of Jerusalem as their leaders. The question, "Is not the time near to build houses?" implies their telling the people that the city will prosper yet all the way they are prospering from their evil advice. In a sense, they are feeding off and prospering from the Jerusalemites as their leaders.

These leaders feared the sword of invaders but felt safe in the city. So, Yahweh will now remove them from the city and "bring a sword" upon them. He will deliver these leaders into the hands of strangers and execute judgements against them. He will remove them from the city and judge them to the border of Israel. Dyer writes, "This was fulfilled literally when the captives of Jerusalem were deported to Riblah in Syria and killed (cf. 2 Kings 25:18-21; Jer. 52:8-11, 24-27)."³ They will then know that the one speaking through Ezekiel is Yahweh (the Lord), the covenant God of Israel. Why? Because He is faithfully carrying out the judgment He had told them He would carry

¹ Dyer, *ibid.*, 1247.

² Dyer, *ibid.*, 1247-1248.

³ Dyer, *ibid.*, 1248.

out if they were not faithful to live by the Mosaic covenant. Note His charge against them: “for you have not walked in My statutes nor have you executed My ordinances but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations around you” (11:12).

Ezekiel’s reaction was as follows: “¹³ Now it came about as I prophesied, that Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, “Alas, Lord God! Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?”

11:14-21. Then Yahweh answers the prophet’s question in verses 14-21.

¹⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹⁵ “Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles and the whole house of Israel, all of them, *are those* to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far from the Lord; this land has been given us as a possession.’

Yahweh’s first point in answering Ezekiel’s cry is to describe the type of people who still occupy Jerusalem. These are not people who are grieving the exile of the other Israelites who have gone into exile to Babylon and the river Chebar. These are people and leaders who see the exile of the other Israelites as God’s blessing “them” with the land. They believe they have been enriched by their exile. As we have just seen in the previous chapters, these are the ones who have been left to be slaughtered by the Babylonians and only a few will survive to go into exile [5:3; 6:8-10] (vv. 14-15).

¹⁶ Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.”’ ¹⁷ Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’ ¹⁸ When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it.

God now shifts in the prophecy to speak of Ezekiel and those who have gone into exile. God’s plan for these exiles is to “be a sanctuary” for them while they are off the [promised] land in Babylon and “other nations.” God will bring them back to the land again someday. In that day, not only will they be back in the land, but they will not have any detestable things or abominations when they return. “God had given Israel the land, but He had also threatened to remove them from it for disobedience (cf. Deut. 28:36, 64–68). God would spare a remnant (Ezek. 6:8; 12:16), as Ezekiel asked, but it would not include the smug, self-righteous leaders of Jerusalem.”⁴ What will make that happen he states is:

¹⁹ And **I will** give them one heart [unity], and put a new spirit within them [spiritual enablement]. And **I will** take the heart of stone out of their flesh [fallen nature] and give them a heart of flesh [spiritual regeneration], ²⁰ **that they may** [spiritual enablement] walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and

⁴ Dyer, *ibid.*, 1248.

abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,” declares the Lord God [messianic rule with a “rod of iron” (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15)].

There will come a day when Israel will be back in their land, they will be unified people (one heart) and they have a new spirit (God will put this in them through spiritual regeneration under the new covenant). “The remnant of Israel could look forward to a national restoration to the Promised Land. A partial restoration took place after the Babylonian Captivity (cf. Ezra; Neh.), but Ezekiel 11:17–21 goes beyond that return and points to a future gathering of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium (cf. 36:24–38; 37:11–28).⁵

11:22-25. The throne-chariot with the glory of God then moved again. This time the glory of the Lord moved from the city of Jerusalem (“from the east gate of the Lord’s house; 10:18-29) “to the mountain which is east of the city (Mount of Olives). Ezekiel is then returned by God’s Spirit in the vision to the exiles at Chaldea (Babylon).

Ezekiel then related to the exiles all the Lord (Yahweh) had shown him in the vision.

C. Yahweh’s reply to the invalid hopes of the Israelites chs. 12–19

1. The dramatic tragedy of exile 12:1–20

12:1-7. After Ezekiel communicated the visions of the departure of Yahweh’s glory given to him in chapters 9-11, God began to give him a series of prophecies in reply to the invalid hopes of the Israelites in exile. The first is an object lesson. Even before God asks him to do what he is about to do, he is told by the Lord that “the rebellious house (of Israel) ... [has] eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are rebellious house” (v. 2).

The Object Lesson (vv. 3-6). So that He is a sign to Israel, Ezekiel is to pack a bag, dig a hole through the wall in his house, and in the evening he is to leave through that hole with the baggage on his shoulders. Then, he is supposed to walk to another location that represents a place of exile. He is also to be wearing a blindfold. He is to do this so that exiles can observe him.

Verse seven simply states that Ezekiel fulfilled what God had asked him to do (v. 7).

The Point of the Lesson (vv. 8-16). Of course, the Spirit knew that the Israelites would ask him what he was doing (vv. 8-9). His interpretation was clear:

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.”’¹¹ Say, ‘I am a sign to you. As I [Ezekiel] have done, so it will be done to them; they will go into exile, into captivity.’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 cannot see the land with *his* eyes.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.¹⁴ **I will** scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all

⁵ Dyer, *ibid.*

his troops; and **I will** draw out a sword after them. ¹⁵ **So they will know that I am the Lord** when **I** scatter them among the nations and spread them among the countries.

Dyer writes:

This first action **in the daytime** was followed by a second action **in the evening**. While the people watched, Ezekiel was to pretend he was being taken captive and was to **dig through the wall and take his belongings** (cf. v. 4) **out through it**, carrying them **on his shoulder**. As Ezekiel pantomimed before the **people** a furtive escape attempt he was also to **cover his face so that** he could not **see the land**.

12:7–11. Ezekiel performed the actions as he **was commanded**. Next **morning** God spoke to him again, this time asking him if the exiles inquired **what** he was **doing**. Evidently the people's curiosity was aroused. Once Ezekiel had their attention he could deliver God's message.

God explained that **this oracle** (message) concerned **the prince in Jerusalem** (i.e., King Zedekiah) **and the whole house of Israel who were there** (i.e., in Jerusalem, v. 10). This first part of Ezekiel's sign pictured the inevitability of exile: **they will go into exile as captives**. Those at ease in Jerusalem would soon be exiles whose only possessions could be held in small sacks flung over their backs.

12:12–16. The second part of Ezekiel's sign (in vv. 5–6) pictured Zedekiah's vain escape attempt. He would try to escape **at dusk** from Jerusalem through a breach **in the city wall**. However, **he would be caught in** God's **snare**. Zedekiah's escape attempt would fail because God would make sure he was captured. The final destiny of Zedekiah was grim. **I will bring him to Babylonia ... but he will not see it, and there he will die**. **His troops** who would try to escape with him would be pursued and killed by the **sword**.

All this was dramatically and accurately fulfilled in 586 BC. After a futile escape attempt Zedekiah was taken to Nebuchadnezzar, forced to watch the enemy kill his sons, and then blinded and carried off to Babylon where he spent the rest of his life in prison (cf. 2 Kings 25:1–7; Jer. 52:4–11).

Those in Jerusalem would ultimately realize the sovereignty of God (Ezek. 12:15–16), but that knowledge would come only after they were dispersed **among the nations**. And yet, as God had said, He would **spare a few of them** (cf. 6:8).⁶

12:17-20. Again, God spoke to Ezekiel. This time he told him that when he ate and drank that he was to do it with trembling and quivering (vv. 17-18). The point of his display was to show how the people in Jerusalem and the land would eat and drink with anxiety and horror before Jerusalem fell. This is God's judgment on them for their violent lives. God states, "The inhabited cities will be laid waste and the land will be a desolation" and because of this they will know that He is Yahweh! (v. 19-20).

2. The present judgment as evidence of divine faithfulness 12:21–28

12:21-25. Next the Lord speaks of a saying they use in Israel: "The days are long and every vision fails." The Lord tells Ezekiel to tell the citizens of Jerusalem that He will make them cease using

⁶ Dyer, *Ibid.*, 1249–1250.

that proverb because “The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision.” He states that the proverb will cease being used “For there will no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.” The visions have been coming from false prophets within Jerusalem and so they were not coming true. They were apparently to make the leaders and people believe everything would go well and to make them feel good (flattery). But the Lord’s words are clear here: “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” (v. 25).

12:26-28. To emphasize the previous point. The Lord speaks again to Ezekiel and states: “²⁶ Furthermore, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²⁷ “Son of man, behold, **the house of Israel is saying** [false prophets], ‘The vision that he sees is for many years *from now*, and he prophesies of times far off.’ ²⁸ Therefore say to them, ‘**Thus says the Lord God,** [what Yahweh says...] “None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed,”’ declares the Lord God.”