

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 20-Chapter Twelve (Ezekiel 12:1-28)

Executive Summary

This briefing document synthesizes the theological, prophetic, and historical commentary on **Ezekiel Chapter 12 (verses 1–28)**, authored by Dr. Luther Ray Smith. The text details God's instructions to the prophet Ezekiel to perform two distinct demonstrative prophecies (the fourth and fifth in the overarching prophetic narrative) directed at the exiles in Babylon and the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem.

I. The Fourth Demonstrative Prophecy: The Sign of Captivity (Ezekiel 12:1–16)

Context of the Rebellious House

God reiterates to Ezekiel that he resides among a "contentious and uncontrollable nation"—a "rebellious house" characterized by having eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear (echoing Ezekiel 2:5–8; 3:9, 26–27).

Symbolic Actions Commanded and Performed

To visually confront their persistent stubbornness, the Lord commanded Ezekiel to enact a dramatic physical demonstration in full view of the Babylonian exiles:

1. **Daytime Preparation:** Assemble "baggage for exile" and move it publicly from one place to another during the day.
2. **Evening Departure:** Dig a hole through the wall with his hands in the dark, load the baggage onto his shoulders, and carry it out.
3. **Covering the Face:** Cover his face so that he could not see the land he was departing from.

Ezekiel executed these commands precisely as instructed. When the exiles neutrally questioned him (*maw aw'saw' attaw?* – "What are you doing?"), God provided the divine interpretation.

II. Prophetic Interpretation: The Fate of King Zedekiah

The source provides a detailed analysis of specific Hebrew terms that illuminate the depth of God's promise to the exiled people.

1. **The Flight:** The king in Jerusalem would attempt to escape at night by digging through the city wall and carrying his baggage in the dark.
2. **The Blinding and Capture:** He would cover his face so he could not see the land. God promised to spread His net over him, snare him, and bring him to Babylon in the land of the Chaldeans.
3. **The Paradox:** The king would die in Babylon, yet he would never see it.

III. Historical Fulfillment: 2 Kings 25:1–7

This demonstrative prophecy was literally fulfilled in Israelite history during the fall of Jerusalem:

Prophetic Element (Ezekiel 12)	Historical Realization (2 Kings 25:1–7)
Night Escape through Wall	The city was broken into; men of war fled by night through the gate between two walls near the king's garden.
Scattering of Troops	The Chaldean army pursued King Zedekiah, overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and his entire army scattered from him.
Capture and Judgment	Zedekiah was captured and brought to the King of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was passed upon him.
Covered Face / Unseen Land	Zedekiah's sons were slaughtered before his eyes, after which his eyes were put out. Bound in bronze fetters, he was taken to Babylon—dying there without ever seeing the land.

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Sparing of the Remnant

In Ezekiel 12:16, God declares that He will spare a small number from the sword, famine, and pestilence. The explicitly stated purpose of sparing this remnant was so they could confess their past abominations among the nations and demonstrate that the Lord is the true God who justly punished their sin.

IV. The Fifth Demonstrative Prophecy: Physiological Impact of Judgment (Ezekiel 12:17-20)

Immediately following the sign of exile, God instructed Ezekiel to perform a second physical demonstration focusing on the internal, emotional, and psychological reality of Jerusalem's impending collapse:

- Eat bread with intense shaking/trembling (*'ra 'aš*).
- Drink water with quivering/quaking (*'rāḡzā*) and severe anxiety (*'d'āḡā*).

Message to Judah:

Ezekiel was instructed to announce to the people that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would consume their meager rations with horror and anxiety. The land would be completely stripped of its fullness due to the pervasive violence of its residents, leaving inhabited cities laid waste and desolate so that all would recognize the supreme authority of the Lord.

V. The Refutation of Israelite Cynicism and Delusion (Ezekiel 12:21-28)

The concluding section of Chapter 12 functions as a prologue to Chapter 13, addressing popular cynical sayings and false confidence among the Israelites.

1. Elimination of the Cynical Proverb (Verses 21-25)

- **The Proverb:** The Israelites popularized the cynical phrase: "The days are long and every vision fails." This arose because the people continually consulted false prophets speaking in the name of foreign deities whose oracles repeatedly failed to materialize. Rather than executing false prophets as mandated by Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 18:20-22), the people endured them and grew dismissive of divine prophecy altogether.
- **The Divine Rebuttal:** God declared He would permanently eliminate this proverb. He affirmed that the fulfillment of every genuine divine vision was near. Judgment would eliminate empty visions and flattering divinations (manipulative practices), as God Himself would speak and perform His word without further delay.

2. Overcoming Rationalized Delay (Verses 26-28)

- **The Rationalization:** Influenced by deceptive diviners, the house of Israel rationalized true prophecies by claiming: "The vision that he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies of times far off."
- **The Divine Rebuttal:** God rejected this temporal deferral, stating categorically: "None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed."

VI. Conclusion

The Breakdown of Israel's Role

Historically, Israel was called to be a distinct, unique example to surrounding heathens, intended to draw pagan nations toward the true God. However, Israel compromised this divine mission by adopting the false deities of neighbor nations. This syncretism led surrounding cultures to perceive the God of Israel as no different from pagan idols. To clear His name and validate His unique righteousness, God enacted severe judgment upon Israel.

Covenantal Faithfulness vs. Human Failure

The commentary emphasizes that God's commitments concerning the land and future blessings of national Israel do **not** depend on Israel's obedience, which failed completely. Instead, God's promise to gather, assemble, transform, and

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unify Israel in their designated land rests solely on His unchanging character and covenantal promises made to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

