

Ezekiel Lesson 17

Ezekiel Chapter 17

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Introduction: We continue in our study on the book of Ezekiel. In Chapter 16, Ezekiel elaborated on how the beautiful woman representing Israel had prostituted herself with other nations by partaking of their idols. In chapter 17, we find several sections are included in this chapter including the parable of the great eagles in verses 1-10, the results of the rebellion of Zedekiah in verses 11-21, and a promise of the Messiah in verses 22-24.

I. God Continues Speaking to Ezekiel in Regards to Israel

Eze 17:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Eze 17:2 Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;

God directed the prophet to set forth an enigmatic allegory and parable to the remainder of the nation of Israel (i.e., Judah). The divine source of Ezekiel's message is here again reiterated.

Eze 17:3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

Eze 17:4 He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he set it in a city of merchants.

Eze 17:5 He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree.

Eze 17:6 And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

The first part of the parable is commenced describing a great eagle with multicolored feathers which landed atop the highest cedar tree in Lebanon. That eagle was likely none other than Nebuchadnezzar. The plucking of the young twigs likely is an allegory of the captivity of Jehoiachin and members of his royal family.

The “land of traffick” and “city of merchants” undoubtedly refers to Babylon itself. The “seed of the land” likely refers to one from Judah.

With all that being said, the allegory is of Zedekiah who was installed upon the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar after the deportation of Jehoiachin. Accordingly, the fruitful field is Judah. The great waters likely are the peoples of Judah. There Zedekiah was installed as king of Judah like a willow tree.

Though under the shadow of Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah and his kingdom were stable and enjoyed relative prosperity in those years.

Eze 17:7 There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

Eze 17:8 It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

In the allegorical parable, another great eagle is described and the vine of Zedekiah's kingdom began to seek alliance with it. The second eagle undoubtedly was Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt. Though a subordinate of Babylon, Zedekiah began to develop an alliance with Egypt, hoping that as allies he could throw off the yoke of Babylon.

The "it" in verse 8 undoubtedly refers to the vine of Judah under Zedekiah. Zedekiah's entitlement to rule was by Nebuchadnezzar and now he was sowing seeds of sedition against him. Zedekiah's own rebellion, ambition, pride, and ingratitude were the cause of his actions .

Eze 17:9 Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

Eze 17:10 Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

In presenting this allegory, God here asked, if it would prosper. God asked if Nebuchadnezzar would not rather uproot the rebellious kingdom of Zedekiah, leaving only desolation in its aftermath. The answers are apparent. Of course, that is exactly what happened.

Again, God asked if Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon could prosper. The answer again is apparent. An east wind in Judah came from the great Arabian desert to the east and was hot and dry. Accordingly, when Nebuchadnezzar arose from the east to quell the rebellion in Jerusalem and Judah; Jerusalem and Zedekiah would utterly wither in destruction.

II. God Questions Whether the Rebellious House of Israel

Eze 17:11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Eze 17:12 Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;

Eze 17:13 And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

Eze 17:14 That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

Here, another divinely inspired section is thus introduced. Unless anyone did not understand the allegorical parable set forth in the preceding section, God spells it out line by line. Nebuchadnezzar had invaded Judah and deposed first Jehoiakim and then Jehoiachin, sending the latter and his princes to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar then placed Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, on the throne of Judah. Zedekiah then privately swore loyalty as a representative of Nebuchadnezzar.

2Ch 36:12 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the LORD.

2Ch 36:13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.

Nebuchadnezzar also took the principal men both in the military and in business to Babylon. Though not noted, I believe they were taken to weaken Judah lest it rebel.

Nebuchadnezzar's intent was that Judah might continue as a vassal state, remaining in submission to Babylon.

The basic condition was that Zedekiah abide by this basic covenant. In so doing, Judah would stand. These conditions were relatively moderate. Accordingly, Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon was viewed as treacherous and seditious.

Eze 17:15 But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

Eze 17:16 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

Eze 17:17 Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons:

Eze 17:18 Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape.

God through the prophet then makes clear the rebellion of Zedekiah. Zedekiah sent ambassadors to Egypt, seeking a military alliance to rebel against Babylon. God asked again if Zedekiah could prosper or escape. In breaking the basis of his own rule, God asked if Zedekiah could be delivered. The answers to all of these are apparent.

God swore by Himself that the Babylonian Empire, which Zedekiah had rebelled against and had broken his agreement with, was where he would die. The king of Egypt, though likely sympathetic to Zedekiah and hostile to Babylon, would not be able to deliver Zedekiah in the coming war.

When the Babylonian army built siege mounds and siege forts against Jerusalem, the Egyptian connection would fizzle out. They would not prevent Babylon from slaughtering many Jews. What enraged Nebuchadnezzar was that Zedekiah ruled by Babylon's dispensation. Zedekiah had made an agreement with Nebuchadnezzar to be subordinate to him.

When Zedekiah flagrantly broke that agreement, he displayed a despisal of Nebuchadnezzar. Enraged by such treachery, Nebuchadnezzar determined that this traitorous vassal would not escape. As events would prove, he did not.

Matthew Henry made these comments about these verses.

Ezekiel 17:11-21

The parable is explained, and the particulars of the history of the Jewish nation at that time may be traced. Zedekiah had been ungrateful to his benefactor, which is a sin against God. In every solemn oath, God is appealed to as a witness of the sincerity of him that swears. Truth is a debt owing to all men. If the professors of the true religion deal treacherously with those of a false religion, their profession makes their sin the worse; and God will the more surely and severely punish it. The Lord will not hold those guiltless who take his name in vain; and no man shall escape the righteous judgment of God who dies under unrepented guilt.

III. God Promises to Recompense For the Evil Done

Eze 17:19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

Eze 17:20 And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

Eze 17:21 And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

When Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar, he had sworn in God's name to honor the terms of the agreement. See II Chronicles 36:13. Now that Zedekiah had flagrantly broken that agreement, he despised the oath he took in God's name and as such the agreement he had made to God. Jehovah vowed that Zedekiah would be punished for that broken agreement.

God Himself vowed to ensnare Zedekiah and bring him to Babylon. There, this unscrupulous Jewish king would answer for his treachery—both to God and Nebuchadnezzar. Those men who sought to escape Jerusalem with Zedekiah as fugitives from Nebuchadnezzar would be caught and summarily executed. The rest would be scattered across the earth.

Jer 52:7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

They would learn the hard way that Jehovah was God and His word was not to be set aside.

Eze 17:22 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent:

Eze 17:23 In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

Eze 17:24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

The prophecy now follows the pattern of the allegory at the beginning of the chapter. However, the context is clear of a coming King who will exceed all. The prophecy of course is of the Messiah. One of His unique titles is that of the Branch. See Zechariah 3:8, 6:12; Isaiah 11:1, 4:2; and Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15.

Zec 6:12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

Isa 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

Isa 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

Jer 33:15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

He will someday be enthroned upon Mount Zion. The high cedar is a likely reference to David and his royal lineage. From him would someday come the Branch which will be planted upon Mount Zion. Jesus Christ will someday rule the earth from Jerusalem. All nations will be under the shadow of the reign of Jesus Christ in His kingdom.

The world system is typified in Babylon. When Jesus Christ returns to rule and reign, the high tree of the world system will be cut down and the meek and lowly person of Jesus Christ will assume world domination.

All nations will know it. He who had been rejected (the dry tree) will be exalted so that every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

John Gill had this to say about the last verse.

Ezekiel 17:24

And all the trees of the field shall know,.... All the nations of the World, and the great ones, and the mighty men of the earth, shall know, own, and acknowledge, when the above things are accomplished:

that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: some by the high and green tree understand Zedekiah, who was brought low; and by the "low" and "dry tree", Jeconiah, who was raised by the king of Babylon, [Jer_52:11](#); this is Jarchi's sense, and is mentioned by Kimchi: others, by the former, think Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonish monarchy are intended, which were brought down; and, by the latter, the house of David, and kingdom of Judah, which were exalted: though rather by the one are meant the people of the Jews, once the people of God, but now cast off; and by the other the Gentiles, called by the grace of God, and received by him: though it seems best of all to interpret the "high and green tree" of the mighty kingdoms of this world, which will be put down by Christ; and the "low and dry tree" of his kingdom and interest, which shall flourish and spread abundantly, and be an everlasting kingdom;

see [Dan_2:44](#);

I the Lord have spoken and have done *it*, because the prophecy of it is sure, and because of the certainty of the fulfilment of it, it is said to be done as soon as it was spoken of.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.