

Ezekiel 24 • What if God Wanted to Make YOU a “Sign”?

Introduction

This is a relatively short lesson about how seriously God feels about our sin. The context is the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem, and how Ezekiel is to communicate the seriousness of the situation. The lesson that Ezekiel had to share is not one he had ever imagined.

[Begin by reading once through v.1-14 and then begin.]

¹And the word of the LORD came to me in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month, saying, ²Son of man, write the name of the day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. ³Speak a parable to the rebellious house and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

“Put on the pot, put it on and also pour water in it;

⁴Put in it the pieces, Every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder; Fill it with choice bones.

⁵Take the choicest of the flock, And also pile wood under the pot. Make it boil vigorously. Also seethe its bones in it.”

⁶“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe to the bloody city, To the pot in which there is rust And whose rust has not gone out of it! Take out of it piece after piece, Without making a choice.

⁷For her blood is in her midst; She placed it on the bare rock; She did not pour it on the ground To cover it with dust.

⁸That it may cause wrath to come up to take vengeance, I have put her blood on the bare rock, That it may not be covered.”

⁹“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe to the bloody city!

I also will make the pile great.

¹⁰Heap on the wood, kindle the fire, Boil the flesh well And mix in the spices, And let the bones be burned.

¹¹Then set it empty on its coals So that it may be hot And its bronze may glow And its filthiness may be melted in it, Its rust consumed.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: What is the context of the situation? (That is, what has happened?) How did Ezekiel know that this event was taking place?

A: Nebuchadnezzar has begun his siege of Jerusalem. Remember that the false prophets in Babylon were saying that this would never happen. The date was January 15, 588 B.C. and is significant. It coincides with Nebuchadnezzar's annals and Jeremiah's records (2 Kings 25:1) regarding the exact day the siege began. Ezekiel knew because God told him. The siege would last about two-and-a-half years.

Q: What does the boiling pot represent?

A: Jerusalem.

[Read v.5]

Q: In verse 5, what do the “choicest of the flock” represent? The wood?

A: These pieces represent the royalty and priesthood still in Jerusalem. They represent the choicest of the people. They could also represent those who were not taken in the deportation of 597, believing that they were the “chosen” ones because God had seen them as good enough to spare. These choice pieces are going to get boiled vigorously in the pot. The “wood” represents Nebuchadnezzar's siege equipment.

[Read v.6]

Q: What is the meaning of verse 6?

A: The pot has impurities (rust) in it. The pieces will be taken out without regard for importance and deported to Babylon.

[Read v.7-8]

Q: What's the meaning of verses 7-8?

A: That in their sacrifices and even murders, they left blood exposed openly which was a violation of the Law. Open blood defiled the land. Because the people have been rebellious about this matter, God will now pour their own blood out on the bare rock.

[Read v.9-11]

Q: What's the meaning of verses 10-11?

A: The implication is that whatever is leftover in the pot will be boiled away until there is no more water. The pot will glow--it will be so hot--that the impurities may be cleansed.

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¹²She has wearied Me with toil,
Yet her great rust has not gone from
her;
Let her rust be in the fire!
¹³In your filthiness is lewdness.
Because I would have cleansed you,
Yet you are not clean,
You will not be cleansed from your
filthiness again
Until I have spent My wrath on you.

¹⁴“I, the LORD, have spoken; it is
coming and I will act. I will not relent,
and I will not pity and I will not be sorry;
according to your ways and according to
your deeds I will judge you,” declares the
Lord GOD.”

¹⁵And the word of the LORD came to me
saying, ¹⁶“Son of man, behold, I am about
to take from you the desire of your eyes
with a blow; but you shall not mourn and
you shall not weep, and your tears shall
not come. ¹⁷Groan silently; make no
mourning for the dead. Bind on your
turban and put your shoes on your feet,
and do not cover your mustache and do
not eat the bread of men.”

¹⁸So I spoke to the people in the
morning, and in the evening my wife
died. And in the morning I did as I was
commanded.

¹⁹The people said to me, “Will you not
tell us what these things that you are
doing mean for us?”

²⁰Then I said to them, “The word of the
LORD came to me saying, ²¹“Speak to the
house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord GOD,
‘Behold, I am about to profane My
sanctuary, the pride of your power, the
desire of your eyes and the delight of
your soul; and your sons and your
daughters whom you have left behind will
fall by the sword. ²²You will do as I have
done; you will not cover your mustache
and you will not eat the bread of men.

²³Your turbans will be on your heads and
your shoes on your feet. You will not
mourn and you will not weep, but you
will rot away in your iniquities and you
will groan to one another. ²⁴Thus Ezekiel
will be a sign to you; according to all that
he has done you will do; when it comes,

[Read v.12-13]

Q: In verse 13, will the pot eventually be clean, and what must happen first?

A: The uncleanness of the land will be cleansed first by judgment (wrath) and then the people will return. So God is going to “sterilize” the pot before He allows the Jews to come back and resettle.

[Read v.14]

Q: What is the level of God’s determination in verse 14?

A: Very high. There is nothing anyone can do about it.

Make application:

- How do the principles here reflect on the state of the nation, of the Church, and of the individual believer?
- How do the principles here reflect on the future of mankind?

[Read v.15-24]

Note: One’s first reaction to the phrase “the desire of your eyes” would be that it is referring to lust or to sin. But in this context the “desire” is a good thing, meaning that which is “precious is one’s sight.”

Q: How is Ezekiel’s wife referred to, and what happens to her?

A: She is referred to as “the desire of your eyes.” This phrase may have been a colloquialism that was used to refer to one’s spouse. “With a blow” (“with one blow” in the NIV) refers probably to something happening suddenly, such as a stroke or heart attack. (Note: The NIV notes assume that this event takes place in conjunction with the destruction of the temple on August 14, 586. That assumption is debatable.)

Q: What does Ezekiel’s wife represent?

A: She represents the temple which was the desire of the eyes of the people; that is, that which represented something of supreme value.

Q: Why does God take Ezekiel’s wife and not the wife of one of the elders in Babylon? That is, what else does Ezekiel’s wife represent, and who else does the temple represent?

A: God takes the desire of Ezekiel’s eyes because Ezekiel is entirely innocent. Because the Jews were not at all innocent, the implication is that the righteous must suffer because of the sins of the unrighteous. Therefore, God is suffering because He is going to have to reject the desire of His eyes, His temple. This also points ahead to the cross of Christ, where the Son is forsaken by the Father who allows His son’s “temple” to be destroyed (yet raised up again in 3 days). This makes verse 13 even more powerful because Christ became unclean and filthy for us. Therefore, God poured out His wrath on His own Son.

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then you will know that I am the LORD God.”

Q: How is this principle applicable to believers today? How do we make personal application?

A: The application is that for the sake of those who are the “unrighteous” (unbelievers), the righteous will often suffer.

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

--Matthew 5:10-16

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

--Matthew 5:38-48

"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

--2 Timothy 3:12

Q: What things or persons in your life are the desire of your eyes?

A: Name these things. Spouses, children, health, will be named, as well as goals or ideals. So the question is, “Is it possible that God may take these things from us as a part of His plan?” What would be our reaction to God? It would probably be that we’re being punished. But we can see in the case of Ezekiel that it was not for punishment that his wife was taken, but as a “sign.”

Q: The final question is, “What would be your reaction if God wanted to make YOU a ‘sign’?”