

Jerusalem's Last Two Signs of Judgment

Ezekiel 24

Ezekiel 24:1-14 - *“Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²“Son of man, write down the name of the day, this very day—the king of Babylon started his siege against Jerusalem this very day. ³And utter a parable to the rebellious house, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Put on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it. ⁴Gather pieces of meat in it, every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder. Fill it with choice cuts; ⁵Take the choice of the flock. Also pile fuel bones under it. Make it boil well, and let the cuts simmer in it.”*

⁶‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is in it, and whose scum is not gone from it! Bring it out piece by piece, on which no lot has fallen. ⁷For her blood is in her midst. She set it on top of a rock; she did not pour it on the ground to cover it with dust. ⁸That it may raise up fury and take vengeance, I have set her blood on top of a rock that it may not be covered.”

⁹‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the bloody city! I too will make the pyre great. ¹⁰Heap on the wood, kindle the fire; cook the meat well, mix in the spices, and let the cuts be burned up. ¹¹“Then set the pot empty on the coals, that it may become hot and its bronze may burn, that its filthiness may be melted in it, that its scum may be consumed. ¹²She has grown weary with lies, and her great scum has not gone from her. Let her scum be in the fire! ¹³In your filthiness is lewdness. Because I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed, you will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore, till I have caused My fury to rest upon you.

¹⁴I, the Lord, have spoken it; It shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not hold back, nor will I spare, nor will I relent. According to your ways and according to your deeds they will judge you,” says the Lord God.”

Background Notes

Ezekiel 24 is a pivotal chapter in the book. It's the halfway point of this prophetic book of 48 chapters, and it marks the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophetic warning messages: the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian forces.

This date was January of 588 BC, the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of Ezekiel's captivity in Babylon. This date corresponds to 2 Kings 25:1-2, which says that the siege lasted for 1 ½ years before the city fell to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. 2 Kings 25:1-2: *“Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his [Zedekiah's] reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.”*

Ezekiel 1-24 contain messages, sermons, parables and signs that Ezekiel gave before the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was in Babylon giving this ministry to the Jews who were already in captivity, but his messages and ministry would certainly have been reported in Jerusalem, where the prophet Jeremiah was ministering. In chapter 24, Ezekiel gave two final signs about God's judgment on Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. These signs were given on the very day that the Babylonians began their siege of Jerusalem.

Doctrinal Points

1. The boiling away of Ezekiel's pot was a sign of coming death and destruction.

There's a good possibility that Ezekiel gave this sign as drama, acting out the parable as he spoke to the people. The parable was given in Hebrew poetry (most translations show this feature). In this parable of the boiling pot, Ezekiel was to take a bronze pot and fill it with water, add choice meat pieces, and then put it on to boil over an open fire. The pot was to boil away until everything was gone – water, meat and bones. In fact, even after everything was burned away, the pot itself with its scum and corrosion was to be melted away. *"Then set the pot empty on the coals, that it may become hot and its bronze may burn, that its filthiness may be melted in it, that its scum may be consumed"*(v11).

The meaning of the parable was quite obvious. Jerusalem was the pot, the contents were the sinful people, and the corrosion and scum were the wickedness of the city. Everything had to be destroyed. The pieces taken out of the pot at random probably represented the people who would be taken away into captivity. Because of Jerusalem's shameless and open shedding of blood, involving the horror of child sacrifice and other murders, God was about to publicly spill Jerusalem's blood on a bare rock in judgment (v7-8). The inhabitants of Judah thought that they were safe in the "protective pot" of Jerusalem, but they were doomed.

The parable of Ezekiel's pot certainly has a message for America today. Like the people of Jerusalem, we have the idea that we're safe in the "protective pot" of our own nation - but no one in any nation is safe from the judgment of God against sin. The boiling away of Ezekiel's pot was a sign of coming death and destruction.

2. The taking away of Ezekiel's wife was a sign of coming death and destruction.

Ezekiel 24:15-23 - *"Also the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹⁶ "Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷ Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man's bread of sorrow."*

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

¹⁹ *And the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?" ²⁰ Then I answered*

them, “The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²¹ ‘Speak to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword.’²² And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man’s bread of sorrow. ²³ Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another.

Now that the beginning of the end had come for Jerusalem and the beautiful Temple, God allowed Ezekiel's wife to die that very night. God allowed this sorrowful event to emphasize what a tragic day it was for God's people (v18). As Ezekiel's wife, the “desire of his eyes,” was taken away in death, so death would come to Jerusalem. The beautiful Temple of Solomon, the desire of the peoples' eyes, would be destroyed.

Although Ezekiel's wife taken away in death, Ezekiel was told not to mourn outwardly. He was to mourn inwardly only. The customary signs of mourning (such as covering the lips or moustache and going barefoot) were not to be observed. This lack of outward mourning indicated that when death and destruction came to Jerusalem, the situation would be so horrible and catastrophic and complete that there would be no opportunity for the customary symbols and rituals of mourning. The taking away of Ezekiel's wife was a sign of coming death and destruction.

Practical Applications

1. Do you really believe in the sovereignty of God?

Ezekiel 24:24-27 - “Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord God.” ²⁵ ‘And you, son of man—will it not be in the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that on which they set their minds, their sons and their daughters: ²⁶ that on that day one who escapes will come to you to let you hear it with your ears? ²⁷ On that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you shall speak and no longer be mute. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they shall know that I am the Lord.’”

Back in chapter 3 God had closed Ezekiel's mouth so that he could only speak when God gave him a message for the people. At other times he was silent. Ezekiel 24:24-27 revealed that Ezekiel would not be free to speak in normal conversation until the refugees arrived from Jerusalem with the news that the city had fallen (chapter 33).

Suppose the Lord called any one of us, as His servants, to go through the same hardships - including the death of your husband or wife as a sign to God's backslidden people. Would we be willing to go through this awful trauma as a sign? Would we be willing, if we knew it was God's will? Do we really believe in the sovereignty of God?

You might say: “Well, Ezekiel was told that these events in his life were the will of God, but God doesn’t tell us.” Oh, but He does! Ephesians 1:11 says that God works **all things** according to the counsel of His will. And Romans 8:28 says that God works **all things** together for the good to those who love God – those who are called according to His purpose.

When tragic events occur, do we really believe God is in control? Do we really believe that God knows what He is doing? Do we really believe in the sovereignty of God? The doctrine of the sovereignty of God and knowing that He controls **all things** can be one of the most comforting and strengthening doctrines when God allows tragic events to come into our lives.

2. How much heat does it take to get our attention?

Throughout the book of Ezekiel, it’s amazing how hardhearted the people of Judah were. They willfully turned away from the Lord and His goodness, and turned instead to idolatry and immorality.

God turned up the heat on His wandering people by sending prophet after prophet to warn them of coming judgment. Did the people pay attention? No, they certainly did not. 2 Chronicles 36:16 says that the people mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets - until the wrath of the Lord rose against the sin of His people.

Then God turned up the heat further by allowing various foreign nations to attack Israel and Judah, but the people’s attention span was short-lived. In Ezekiel’s day, God had turned up the heat to the point where two invasions of Judah had already taken place - but the people still did not pay attention. Their response was apathy and unbelief. Therefore there was no further remedy. God had to turn up the heat to the point where the sinful and unrepentant people would be removed – as illustrated by the sign of the boiling pot.

What about us? How much “heat” does it take to get our attention? When God brings discipline into our lives, do we pay attention? Or do we ignore His warnings? Does He have to turn up the heat further? 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 says, *“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord.”*

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