

Siege of Jerusalem

(4) Ezekiel 4:1 – 5:17

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**BIG BEND
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How is God's judgment on Israel and Judah relevant to our times?

- Israel & Judah were God's representatives on earth prior to the Cross.

Today, the church is God's representative on earth...

What nation more than any other represents the God of Scripture on earth today?

The USA stands out having been started by people seeking freedom from the corrupted state churches of Europe and founding the USA as a Christian Nation (per the quotes of the founders).

- The USA went on to represent the tenants of freedom throughout the world and fund most of the missionary activity in the world.
- The USA is still regarded by most people in the world as a Christian Nation despite the historical revisionist claims of today's secular humanists

Did God make a covenant with the USA as He did with Israel?

While the USA did not have a covenant with God as Israel, there are principles that apply to any nation representing God and having been blessed by Him...

- When that nation turns away from God, there will be consequences.

The Siege of Jerusalem Portrayed

"You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem. ² Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around. ³ Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel. ⁴ "Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity. ⁵ For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. ⁶ And when you have completed them, lie again on

your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year. ⁷ "Therefore you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem; your arm shall be uncovered, and you shall prophesy against it. ⁸ And surely I will restrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another till you have ended the days of your siege. ⁹ "Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. During the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it. ¹⁰ And your food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it. ¹¹ You shall also drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; from time to time you shall drink. ¹² And you shall eat it as barley cakes; and bake it using fuel of human waste in their sight."

¹³ Then the Lord said, "So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, where I will drive them." ¹⁴ So I said, "Ah, Lord God! Indeed I have never defiled myself from my youth till now; I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has abominable flesh ever come into my mouth."

¹⁵ Then He said to me, "See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it." ¹⁶ Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread, ¹⁷ that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity."

v1-3 – What did God ask Ezekiel to do?

Take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem: Make a model of the siege of Jerusalem on a clay tablet.

Lay a siege against it: Like a child playing with toy soldiers, Ezekiel arranged a **siege wall** against his clay Jerusalem, along with the **camps** of siege armies and their **battering rams**.

- This was what would happen at Jerusalem in 588 b.c. when the Babylonian army laid siege to the city.

What's with the iron plate?

Take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city: Ezekiel made an unbreakable barrier between himself and the scene *he* constructed. This symbolized the barrier between God and Jerusalem, meaning that God would *not* intervene and rescue Jerusalem in the coming siege.

How would “this will be a sign to the house of Israel?”

There were some among the Israelite captives in Babylon (and also in Jerusalem) who thought that God would defend Jerusalem and rescue her when the Babylonians came again against her. This was a sure **sign** that it would not be so.

v4-6 – What was Ezekiel to do next?

Act out the years of iniquity...

Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: God commanded Ezekiel to enact another sign related to judgment against Israel. Presumably lying on his bed in his house, Ezekiel was to lie on his **left side** and in some unknown symbolic way **lay the iniquity of the house of Israel** upon himself.

v5 – How long was Ezekiel to lay on his left side?

Ezekiel was to act out this ritual for 390 days which represented 390 years of inequity for Israel.

- When you add the years of the reigns of the kings of Judah from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, in 1 and 2 Kings, you have a total of 394 years. Since three of the years of Rehoboam's reign he walked with God (2 Chron. 11:16–17), we end up with a number very close to Ezekiel's 390 years.

v6 – How long was Ezekiel to lay on his right side?

Ezekiel was to act out this ritual for 40 days which represented 40 years of inequity for Judah.

- Perhaps the forty of Judah refers to that part of Manasseh's 55 year's reign in which he had not repented, and which, was the cause of God's removal of Judah, notwithstanding Josiah's reformation (1Ki 21:10-16 2Ki 23:26, 27).

v7 – What's with Ezekiel's arm being uncovered?

You shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem; your arm shall be uncovered: In this acted out prophecy, Ezekiel demonstrated that the strong arm of God's judgment against Jerusalem would be active and unrestrained ready to strike and slay.

v8 – How is it that Ezekiel would be constrained?

I will restrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another: After symbolically standing in the place of God, Ezekiel then stood in the place of Jerusalem, restrained and helpless before God and His coming judgment.

v9 – What was Ezekiel to eat during the 390 days?

Ezekiel was commanded to make bread of many different grains, and **eat it** during those days. This shows that during those days, Ezekiel was not *completely* inactive and laying on his side continually.

- Perhaps during his “office hours” when he received visitors inquiring about the latest Word from the Lord.

What was the significance of the different grains?

Wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt: The unusual bread was an acted-out prediction of life during siege, when anything and everything that could be eaten was.

- In times of *scarcity*, it is customary in all countries to mix several kinds of coarser grain with the finer, to make it last the longer

v10-11 – What was the significance of measuring the amount of the bread and water?

The bread and water would be carefully weighed and rationed during siege.

- With a *shekel* calculated at about 11.4 grammes, this would be almost exactly 8 ounces of bread per day.
- The water measurement of one-sixth of a *hin* would be equal to a fraction over a pint, or 0.61 litres.

v12-13 – How was Ezekiel to cook the bread?

Bake it using fuel of human waste: In this Ezekiel demonstrated not only the desperation of siege, but also the misery of exile **among the Gentiles**, where care for keeping kosher food and its preparation were impossible.

- God did not tell Ezekiel to disobey the Law of Moses. There is no prohibition in the ‘kosher’ laws of the Torah for using human excrement for fuel.
- Dried animal dung was used as fuel in the east and it was not regarded as ritually unclean. Since the siege would kill all cattle for food, only human excrement would be available for fuel.

What does it mean that Ezekiel was to cook the bread in their sight?

Ezekiel acted out these long, daily prophesies before the people of his community. No doubt, he would explain them as he did them daily.

v14 – What did Ezekiel think of God’s call for him to be a baker?

I have never defiled myself from my youth till now: Ezekiel objected to the command to prepare bread from a fire fueled by burning human waste. It was disguising even if it wasn’t against kosher customs. Ezekiel’s objection was based on the fact that he had never so offensively broken Jewish dietary laws.

v15 – How did God react to Ezekiel’s objection?

See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human waste: God accommodated the appeal of the prophet. The lesson could be made without actually using **human waste** to bake the bread. Perhaps God provided cow dung that looked like human waste.

- Ancients would use dung to fuel a fire, but normally dung would not be used for a fire to bake bread being considered unclean.
- God allowed Ezekiel to *lessen* the offense, but not take it away.

What does this tell us about God?

Maybe God intended all along for Ezekiel to use cow dung for his bread and starting out with human waste and relenting made Ezekiel feel better about it.

v16-17 – What was the point of Ezekiel’s bakery?

Surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem:

A terrible siege was coming to Jerusalem and both bread and water would be **cut off**. The siege would bring **anxiety** and **dread** to Jerusalem, and they would **waste away because of their iniquity**.

The purpose of all the acts in symbolic form was to impress the people with the coming famine during the siege of Jerusalem and the people’s suffering in exile among the heathen.

What was the good news in this prophecy of doom for Jerusalem?

While not specifically stated, the faithful Jewish remnant would have to ask themselves, why was God putting them through this and conclude that God was disciplining the nation so that they could be restored as His representatives on earth...

Proverbs 3:12 – *For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.*

After all, God was still speaking to Israel revealing His desire to restore them...

Amos 3:7 – *Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*

God always keeps His promises so Israel would have to be restored.

What is God saying to us today in the midst of a pandemic that threatens to permanently change life as we know it?

- People need to consider their own mortality and embrace His provision for eternal life: Believe that Jesus did pay the penalty for my sin when He died.
- Don’t delay trusting in God’s provision for salvation... the world is not going to let a good crisis go to waste and is determined to usher in the globalist tyranny of the Tribulation.
- Jesus is returning soon because the stage is being set for the end of the Age.

A Sword Against Jerusalem

“And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. ² You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. ³ You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. ⁴ Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel. ⁵ “Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. ⁶ She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.’ ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you’— ⁸ therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. ⁹ And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. ¹⁰ Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds. ¹¹ ‘Therefore, as I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. ¹² One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst;

and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. ¹³ 'Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them. ¹⁴ Moreover I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that are all around you, in the sight of all who pass by. ¹⁵ 'So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that are all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the Lord, have spoken. ¹⁶ When I send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. ¹⁷ So I will send against you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the Lord, have spoken.' "

What was Ezekiel to do in this next prophetic demo?

Take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor: In Ezekiel 4, God gave the prophet three prophetic demonstrations of coming judgment. Ezekiel 5 begins with a fourth, using a **sharp sword** as a **barber's razor** to cut Ezekiel's **head** and **beard**.

Was this normal to use a sword to cut hair?

A **sword** isn't usually used to cut hair – swords are used in battle. Because this acted-out prophecy concerned the judgment the army of Nebuchadnezzar would bring upon Jerusalem, a **sword** was appropriate.

What did the cutting off of hair symbolize?

The "*cutting off the hair* was a sign of *mourning*; see on Jeremiah 45:5; 48:37; and also a sign of great *disgrace*; see 2 Samuel 10:4, 5.

- Such shaving was forbidden to a priest like Ezekiel and ordinarily meant the loss of priestly status and position. The hair of the priest was a mark of his consecration to God's service (see Lev 21:5; 19:27).

What was Ezekiel to do with the cut hair?

Take scales to weigh and divide the hair: God wanted Ezekiel to divide the hair into thirds, using a scale to divide it accurately.

- The balances showed that the judgment was a discriminating one. God's justice is accurate (Jer 15:2).

Burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city: Using the divided groups of hair, God told Ezekiel to act out another prophecy. This message powerfully contradicted the false promises of deliverance spoken by false prophets.

- One third was burned **in the midst of the city** of Jerusalem.
- One third was stuck **with the sword**.
- One third was scattered **in the wind**.

v3-4 – What was Ezekiel to do with the few strands of hair that remained?

take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment: Ezekiel was also to attach a few hairs to the hem of his clothing, and burn a few more in a fire. This spoke of the small remnant left behind and the suffering they would face.

v5 – How is Jerusalem in the midst of the nations?

I have set her in the midst of the nations: In both a historical and redemptive sense, Israel has been at the center of God's plan and work in the world. In some sense, it is also true geographically, as Israel stands at the meeting point of continents and empires.

v6 – What issue did God have with Jerusalem?

She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations: Jerusalem should have honored and submitted to Him, but was more rebellious and wicked than the pagan **nations**.

v7 – How could Jerusalem be more wicked than the Gentiles who mostly did not even know God?

Luke 12:48 – *For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required*

Given Jerusalem's clear knowledge of the will of her God and the uniquely just nature of his ordinances, Ezekiel's characterization of his people as more wicked than the nations is justified.

- instead of being a witness to the heathen nations about her, Israel excelled them in idolatry.

v8 – What was God attitude toward Jerusalem?

I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst: Because of their great sin, God promised to *personally* bring judgment against them. Even though it would come largely through the instrument of the Babylonian army, it was *God's* judgment upon them.

v9 – What was God preparing to do that He had never done before?

I will do among you what I have never done: Never before had God brought such a severe judgment upon His people as He did in the fall and conquest of Jerusalem under the Babylonians. One may say that *since* then such judgments have equaled or surpassed (as in the fall of Jerusalem under the Romans), but not *before* then.

v10 – How bad will it get in Jerusalem?

Therefore fathers shall eat their sons: God promised to do a terrible and unique work of judgment. Those remaining in Jerusalem would be reduced to the most terrible suffering (such as cannibalism); those who survived God would **scatter to all the winds**.

- The same is referred to by Jeremiah, Lamentations 4:10. Even the *women*, who were remarkable for *kindness* and *humanity*, *boiled* their own children, and ate them during the siege.

v11-12 – How had the inhabitants sinned against God?

Because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things: Earlier God said that Israel sinned against Him worse than the pagan nations (Ezekiel 5:6). Here is one significant example of this. The pagans did not have God's **sanctuary** in their midst; yet when Israel did, they **defiled** it with **detestable things** and **abominations**.

Why did God say, “therefore, as I live”?

This was an appropriate declaration, contrasting Yahweh, the living God, with the idols of surrounding nations.

How would Jerusalem be diminished?

Therefore I will also diminish you: They **defiled** God's sanctuary; He would **diminish** them. He promised to do it in the proportion of thirds suggested by Ezekiel's prophetic demonstration with the sword-cut hair.

- One third **shall die of the pestilence** and **famine**.
- One third shall be killed **by the sword all around**.
- One third shall be scattered **to all the winds**, with a **sword** following them.

v13-14 – How would God vent His anger?

Thus shall My anger be spent: The idea is that God's **fury** had built up a long time against His wicked and rebellious people. When the time was right, in the near future, it would **be spent** and it would **rest upon them**.

What is the zeal of God?

In my zeal: “The Hebrew word *gina* suggests ‘ardour’, ‘passionate feeling’ (the root meaning is ‘to grow purple in the face’), and therefore covers both zeal and jealousy, as well as resentment and indignation at an insult done to the honor of oneself or of another.

How would God cause His fury to rest upon them?

God's displeasure, and the evidences of it, shall not be *transient*; they shall be *permanent*, and very clear.

How would the people react to the reproach against Jerusalem?

They shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it: When it came to pass, it would witness to Israel as a vindication of the repeated announcements and warnings of judgment. It would witness to the surrounding nations as a demonstration of God's righteousness (**I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations**).

v15 – What would be the legacy of Israel rebelling against God?

So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations: God would accomplish His purpose of teaching the nations through Israel. If they had obeyed the covenant He would have taught them through the blessings given (as in the days of Solomon). For the covenant breakers, God would teach the nations through His judgment upon His people.

v16 – What would be the terrible arrows God would send on Jerusalem?

Famine and pestilence are represented as *poisoned arrows*, inflicting death wherever they *wound*.

So I will send against you famine and wild

beasts...pestilence and blood: The judgment would come as promised, and would come in many different ways.

v17 – What wild beasts would God send against Judah?

either the king of Babylon, which, like a ravenous and insatiable beast, tore and devoured all. Or, literally, lions, bears, etc., which are one of his four sore judgments...

Ezekiel 14:21 – *For thus says the Lord God: “How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it?”*

Is the USA a Christian Nation today?

Maybe culturally, but the USA has increasingly compromised with the world to the point where even that can be challenged.

What role has the church in America had in the decline of our culture?

Lately, we have failed to influence the culture in any meaningful way. Instead, the culture has had a greater influence on the church causing it to compromise with the world.

How can Christians avoid compromising with the world?

Study to be so familiar with God's Word so that we can recognize the deceptions of the culture as the lies they are.

2 Timothy 3:13-15 – evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures

What kind of anti-God propaganda do we hear in the media today?

- Men can be women (and visa-versa)
- Homosexuality is normal
- Abortion is a form of healthcare

What is the objective of such propaganda?

It is not just to get you to change your mind on what you believe to be objective truth, it is more about getting you to set aside your ability to reason and apply common-sense in order to accept their version of the truth.

- If they can get you to acquiesce and mentally kneel in submission to something as asinine as swapping genders, they can get you to believe ANYTHING.

Will God raise up a Babylon to cause the USA to be a non-factor among end-times nations?

He could, but most likely He will just allow us to self-destruct...

Romans 1:28 – And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind

Thinking there can be 60+ valid genders is the product of a debased mind.

There will be no super-power dominating the nations when Jesus returns... the USA will just be yet another supportive nation in the global revived Roman Empire of the Antichrist.