

feet that looked like polished brass calves' hooves and they had human hands under their wings. Two wings of each creature reached out to touch the wings of the creatures on each side of them. Their faces did not turn at all. Each face looked straight ahead. Each creature had two wings that they used to cover their bodies. And when they moved, they moved together in straight lines, never leaning or turning in a curved direction, and they moved as fast as a lightning bolt.

Among the four creatures I could see a fire of burning coals with flames dashing back and forth between them. The four creatures moved as fast as these lightning bolts.

Beside each creature I saw a wheel that looked like it was cut from a sparkling gold colored gem. But each wheel was actually two wheels – one inside the other. One faced north and south and the other faced east and west. When these wheels moved, they moved only in the four directions and they never turned. Their rims were full of eyes! These wheels moved with each creature.

Over the heads of the creatures I saw this beautiful floor that glowed like glass and above it was an incredible bluish-green throne. It looked like the form of a man was sitting on the throne and the sound was like the roar of a mighty waterfall! From the waist up, the Man looked like glowing metal and from His waist down, He looked like a roaring fire. He had a rainbow all around Him and it looked like the Glory of the LORD. When I heard His voice, I fell on my face.

The LORD told me to stand so He could talk to me. When He spoke, I felt the Spirit enter me! He gave me a task. He was sending me to the rebellious and obstinate Israelites to say to them, "Thus says the LORD." He told me not to be afraid of them no matter what they said or did, whether or not they listened to me. He warned me not to be rebellious like they were! Then He gave me a scroll to eat. It had words on it, all over, back and front. The words expressed tears and grief and distress.

I ate the scroll which tasted sweet like honey. Then the LORD told me to go to the Israelites where you live and speak to them. "They are intelligent, but they will not listen to you! Do not worry! Hide my words in your heart and tell them what I tell you to tell them. They will not listen."

The Spirit lifted me up and I heard the rumble from the creatures say, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD." So I went to the Israelites at the Chebar River in the village of Tel-abib and I sat quietly with them for seven days and I made them very uncomfortable (Ezekiel 1:1 – 3:15).

# The Visions of Ezekiel

## Lesson 4

After the LORD had encountered Ezekiel on the plain by the Chebar River, He sent Ezekiel to the exiles living by the river at Tel-abib. Some say that Tel-abib was the home village of Ezekiel, but that is pure speculation. We do not know where Ezekiel was living when he saw the LORD coming to him for the first time in the whirlwind. But with the events of this next story, Ezekiel might as well call Tel-abib his home village, at least for the next year or so.

Ezekiel spoke saying, “Then I came to the exiles who lived beside the river Chebar at Tel-abib, and I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among them (Ezekiel 3:15).” The Hebrew word for “consternation” is *shamen* and it means *to be appalled*. No doubt, the exiles living in Tel-abib were quite appalled when a young man entered their village, sat in the middle of their tents for seven days and said nothing! Surely, they said something to him, but he said nothing to them! Why did the LORD send him to the village without a message to speak? Perhaps the LORD was waiting for Ezekiel to prove that he was, in fact, going to follow the commands of the LORD. The LORD already knew the heart of Ezekiel and what he would do. The question was really if Ezekiel had enough gumption to take on the task put before him. The exiles were obstinate and stubborn, and the LORD had already stated that they would not listen to him. Why would any human want to take on a project knowing he would face rejection? But the LORD was not concerned with the message being rejected, He was concerned with Ezekiel’s faithfulness to deliver the message.

### STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURE

#### 6. Ezekiel’s First Assignment from the LORD (3:16-21)

##### a) The Word of the LORD (3:16)

**Eze 3:16 At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me, saying,**

The first step for Ezekiel was to walk from the plain to the village and wait there for seven days. Ezekiel followed through with the LORD’s first instruction and with this lesson we arrive at verse 16, seven days later. The text does not tell us the day on the calendar, but we can determine that on our own. It was the twelfth day of the fourth month of the 30<sup>th</sup> year since the formation of the Babylonian Empire by Nebuchadnezzar’s father. On that day, the “word of the LORD came” to Ezekiel with his first assignment as the *watchman of the exiles*.

##### (1) The Watchman’s Appointment (3:17)

**Eze 3:17 "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.**

Ezekiel was still in the village of Tel-abib when the LORD called to him with the words “Son of man.” In spite of his frailty as a human, the LORD had a big job for him to do. The LORD appointed Ezekiel to be a “watchman” of the “house of Israel.” A “watchman” is one who oversees the safety and welfare of something. In this case, Ezekiel was to be the *overseer* for the LORD of the *exiles of the house of Israel*. Ezekiel’s main audience would be the remnant

that was taken into captivity by the Assyrian Empire from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The words of the LORD were to be spoken through the lips of Ezekiel to the descendants of the ten tribes of the *nation of Israel* descended from Jacob. Here we see Ezekiel's job description. "Whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me."

### (2) The Watchman's First Warning (3:18)

**Eze 3:18 "When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.**

The LORD's warnings would be to the "wicked," the ungodly among the *house of Israel*; however, the LORD had chosen Ezekiel to be His mouthpiece to these exiles. Being chosen by the LORD and accepting that position carried great responsibility. Failing to fulfill the duties of the job, especially when speaking for the LORD of all Creation, carries great consequences. In this case, Ezekiel's task was simply to deliver the message. The message from the LORD through Ezekiel could cause the wicked person to turn "from his wicked way that he may live" and not die in his sin. The prophet was to deliver the message of the LORD in the hope that some would repent. But, if Ezekiel failed to deliver that message, if the wicked never heard the LORD's message, then the wicked might die in his sin and perish because he had never heard the life saving message. What would the LORD do in that case? He would blame Ezekiel! It was Ezekiel's fault that the message was not delivered and Ezekiel would have to accept the grave penalty that went along with a failure of duty. Ezekiel would receive the same punishment as the one who died in his sin without hearing the message and repenting.

### (3) The Watchman's First Reprieve (3:19)

**Eze 3:19 "Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself.**

The LORD did not put Ezekiel in a no-win situation. All Ezekiel had to do was deliver the message that the LORD put in his mouth and let go! Ezekiel did not have to force the listener to hear the message and change his way. Ezekiel was responsible only for delivering the message, not the response to the message. We might say it this way if we happened to be the LORD. "Ezekiel, say what I tell you to say and you are off the hook and sin-free!"

### (4) The Watchman's Second Warning (3:20)

**Eze 3:20 "Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.**

We must notice in this second warning to Ezekiel that the LORD will direct all His words to the wicked, but some will be directed to the righteous. The righteous can be led astray and do wrong. By this time, the righteous of the *house of Israel* had lived in exile long enough that the wicked of the *house of Israel* had grown in numbers and out numbered the righteous. When that happened, some of the less wicked things done by the wicked had become the normal and acceptable things among the righteous too. Those things were still wicked in the LORD's eyes but the righteous had become used to the sin, turned their heads away from the sin, accepted the

sin and in some cases, embraced the sin. The LORD had not embraced the sin and He wanted the righteous to turn from their evil ways, too. He had a message for these people and, as with the wicked, Ezekiel was to be the LORD's mouthpiece to the righteous. But if the righteous never heard that they had become wicked, how would they know? How would they know without a preacher? How would they know without a prophet? They would not and they would die with unrepented sin. If Ezekiel did not deliver the message, the LORD would consider him just as sinful and guilty of the same sin.

#### (5) The Watchman's Second Reprieve (3:21)

**Eze 3:21 "However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself."**

But, if Ezekiel delivered the message and the sinner turned from his sin, he did so because he heard the message from Ezekiel. He was the only mouthpiece the LORD was going to use to deliver His message to the *house of Israel in exile*. All Ezekiel had to do was deliver the message. He was not responsible for the outcome and reaction of the people. By delivering the message, Ezekiel had completed his task and was sin-free.

#### 7. The Hand of the LORD (3:22-23)

##### a) The LORD's Place (3:22)

**Eze 3:22 The hand of the LORD was on me there, and He said to me, "Get up, go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you."**

The two warnings from the LORD to Ezekiel were extremely pressing on the prophet. He felt like the LORD's hand was pressing on him greatly. The LORD did not give Ezekiel a choice, at least not in Ezekiel's mind. Ezekiel was so consumed by the LORD's words and he did not want to fail in his job. Think about this. The LORD had chosen Ezekiel. The LORD had decided that He would tell Ezekiel the words He wanted him to tell the *house of Israel*. If Ezekiel did not tell the *house of Israel* the words of the LORD, all the sins of the *house of Israel* would be blamed on Ezekiel and he would bear the guilt and penalty of their sins. Ezekiel, who had seen the glorious majesty of the throne of the LORD in the whirlwind, did not think he had a choice. When the LORD told Ezekiel to get off the ground and go back to the plain where he had first met the LORD, Ezekiel did just that – in a heartbeat. Those who were appalled at his being in their camp for seven days without saying a word must have surely been stunned when he left the village speechless.

##### b) The LORD's Glory (3:23)

**Eze 3:23 So I got up and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar, and I fell on my face.**

Back on the plain, the LORD was waiting for Ezekiel in all the same glory that he had seen Him in before. The four living creatures had to be there. The wheels in the middle of the wheels had to be there because they were attached to the throne. The rainbow was there. The fire was there. It was all there, including the whirlwind. Upon his arrival Ezekiel says, "and I fell on my

face.” Would you not do the same? Would you not fall to the ground before the Almighty LORD of Creation?

#### 8. Ezekiel’s Second Assignment from the LORD (3:22-5:17)

##### a) The LORD’s Instruction (3:24)

**Eze 3:24 The Spirit then entered me and made me stand on my feet, and He spoke with me and said to me, "Go, shut yourself up in your house.**

Once again, Ezekiel encountered the “Spirit.” Ezekiel fell on his face before the throne of the LORD and the “Spirit” entered him and physically lifted him to his feet. We cannot and should not divorce this verse from those verses that have come before. In verse 23, Ezekiel revealed that he had met the LORD for the second time out on the plain. The LORD spoke to him there before and He was speaking to him there again. The “Spirit,” the entity that entered Ezekiel and stood him up had not spoken to Ezekiel yet.

Ezekiel had fulfilled his first seven-day assignment. It was time for him to learn about a second assignment. In the first assignment the LORD told Ezekiel everything that he was supposed to do before he did it. It was as simple as *go to the village and say nothing for seven days*. In this second assignment, the LORD was going to tell Ezekiel exactly what he was supposed to do and what others were going to do to him over the next 430 days. Once He told and showed Ezekiel what he was to do, the LORD would not speak to him again until he had completed the task. Ezekiel then recorded for us what the LORD told him to do when he met Him out on the plain for the second time.

“Go shut yourself up in your house,” the LORD says to Ezekiel. We need to understand that when the English uses the word “house” it simply means the place Ezekiel and his wife call home, keep their possessions, and spend the nights. For Ezekiel, it was more than likely nothing more than a tent.

##### (1) Be a Prisoner (3:25)

**Eze 3:25 "As for you, son of man, they will put ropes on you and bind you with them so that you cannot go out among them.**

The LORD forewarned Ezekiel that when he returned to his house to fulfill this assignment, the exiles of the *nation of Israel* would be so disturbed by his actions that they would tie him in ropes to keep him from spreading his message to the others. Some of their frustration with Ezekiel would stem from the fact that he would be play-acting without speaking a word. But why? The next verse gives the answer.

##### (2) Be a Mute (3:26)

**Eze 3:26 "Moreover, I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be mute and cannot be a man who rebukes them, for they are a rebellious house.**

Ezekiel would not be able to speak to the exiles even if he wanted to. Why? The LORD would not let him. From this point in the story until the twelfth vision (33:22), the LORD would restrict Ezekiel’s speech to the words He told Ezekiel to say. If we remember, Ezekiel had already revealed his angry attitude toward the exiles because of what the LORD had said to him before his first assignment. The LORD did not want Ezekiel to interject his personal opinions to the exiles. He was the tool of the LORD, the LORD’s mouthpiece, to speak the word of the

LORD from the mind of the LORD and nothing from the mind of Ezekiel. Ezekiel was to be a true prophet, without a word of error.

### (3) Be a Preacher (3:27)

**Eze 3:27 "But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you will say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.**

Ezekiel will not be permitted to speak his mind, but he will be required to speak the words, "Thus says the LORD God" coupled with the message that is to follow. Some exiles will react positively to the LORD's message, some will not. The LORD already knew that most of the exiles alive in Ezekiel's day were "rebellious" against Him and Ezekiel would not be able to change their minds or hearts. That was not Ezekiel's job. His job was to deliver the message. Because he delivered the word-for-word message from the LORD through Ezekiel, they would be without excuse when the LORD brought judgment against them.

### (4) Be an Actor in a Play (4:1-5:4)

#### (a) Letter a Brick (4:1)

**Eze 4:1 "Now you son of man, get yourself a brick, place it before you and inscribe a city on it, Jerusalem.**

The LORD assigned Ezekiel the job of an actor and he was going to need a few props for the play he was going to act out. First, Ezekiel needed a clay brick with the name "Jerusalem" inscribed on it.

#### (b) Lay a Siege (4:2)

**Eze 4:2 "Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise up a ramp, pitch camps and place battering rams against it all around.**

Second, around the brick, Ezekiel was to build a wall with a ramp leading to the top of the wall. Outside the wall, he was to build a miniature soldier "camp" to represent where the army that would attack Jerusalem would live during their siege. All around the wall he was to place miniature "battering rams" to be used to break down the gates and the walls of Jerusalem.

#### (c) Lift a Plate (4:3a)

**Eze 4:3a "Then get yourself an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it.**

Third, Ezekiel was instructed to place an "iron plate" between him and the city. Fourth, Ezekiel was to begin playing the game of war against the city. Ezekiel would represent the leader of the attacking army, one of resolve, one of iron, one undefeatable enemy to the *nation of Israel*. This play-acting would surely be an insult to the exiles but it was more than that!

(d) Imitate a Siege (4:3b)

Eze 4:3b **This is a sign to the house of Israel.**

Ezekiel's play, presented against Jerusalem, would be a signal to the *house of Israel*, a revelation of the future fate of the holy city. Even though Ezekiel's play would be directed to the *house of Israel*, who abandoned the city, formed a new nation and established a new capital at Shechem during the first year of Rehoboam's reign as king, Jerusalem still held a dear place in their hearts, regardless of their rebellious sinful nature. They knew the importance of the city of Jerusalem and they hoped to eventually return to their Promised Land with Jerusalem as their capital. They knew they could not do it under the current administration, the Babylonian Empire, but they could still hope that their descendants would one day return. The eastern mindset or what some call the *eastern world view* is different from the western mindset or *western world view*. Easterners hope for things to occur and will patiently wait for their fulfillment in their lifetime or perhaps be fulfilled many generations in the future. Westerners allow their hopes to die with the death of the generation that dreamed that hope. For instance, we think about the participants in World War II as being the greatest generation because they fought for a better life for their children in America than they ever could have imagined they would experience. But with the death of the last remnants of that generation, the essence of their hope for a better America that incorporated the *American Dream* as it is called died away, replaced by an America with its hand out for subsidies, entitlements, free education, free medical care, free everything. History no longer matters. Nations who have gone the path America is headed down have already failed but their failure is being ignored by today's America. If only the western mind could take a lesson from the eastern mind which is always building toward a goal and a hope and a desire. The eastern world vision of the onlookers of Ezekiel's play did not like what they saw. It did not fit their goal and hope for the future of their tribes. Surely, the LORD would not approve of the downfall and end of Jerusalem's being the capital of the Promised Land.

(e) Lie to the Left (4:4-5)

Eze 4:4 **"As for you, lie down on your left side and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; you shall bear their iniquity for the number of days that you lie on it."**<sup>Eze</sup>  
4:5 **"For I have assigned you a number of days corresponding to the years of their iniquity, three hundred and ninety days; thus you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel."**

When Ezekiel had all the props in place to begin his play-acting war game against Jerusalem in front of the *exiles of the house of Israel*, he was instructed to lie on his left side for 390 days – one day for each year of their sinfulness against the LORD. Not to get too far ahead in the storyline, we must stop here to report that the reality of the 390 years of sinful rebellion against the LORD by the *Northern Kingdom of Israel* had already long since passed by at least 125 years. From the year the northern ten tribes of Israel separated from king Rehoboam and formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, 390 years had passed. The kingdom was captured in 722 BC by the Assyrian Empire. At the point of this instruction, it was now 597 BC. For Ezekiel to lie on his right side for 390 days was not a prophecy about the future of the Northern Kingdom, it was a reminder of its past, a distressing past that the exiles in front of him knew all too well.

(f) Lie to the Right (4:6)

**Eze 4:6 "When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, *but on your right side and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah; I have assigned it to you for forty days, a day for each year.***

After Ezekiel completed lying on his right side for 390 days, the LORD instructed him to turn over and lie on his right side for 40 days. Unlike the 390-day illustration to the Northern Kingdom that was a reminder of their sinful past, the 40-day illustration was a time marker for the destruction of Jerusalem, still in the future of the giving of this vision. It was a prophecy.

We have the advantage of knowing that Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. By looking backward 40 years from the destruction of Jerusalem we arrive at the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Josiah in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Josiah had become the king when he was eight years old, but in his 18<sup>th</sup> year as king, at the age of 26, he required a full accounting of the offerings being collected in the Temple. During the discovery time of the records for the Temple contributions, the Mosaic Law, as it is called, the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy, were discovered and Josiah had them read to him. His heart was changed and he was determined to return the kingdom to the Law of the LORD and remove all the idols in the land and the places of false worship. In theory his orders cleaned up the kingdom and purified it from the idolatrous sin practiced in his land. However, the change of his heart toward the LORD and his orders to rid the country of its idolatry did not change the hearts of the people or stop them from secretly continuing to practice their pagan rituals. Idolatry went underground in the kingdom and flourished even greater than before. The people heard the decree of King Josiah which was in perfect unison with the desire of the LORD, yet the people did not change their ways. In Josiah's 18<sup>th</sup> year as king, the message of the LORD had been renewed in the hearing of the people and from that moment, the clock began to tick on their 40 years of rebellion against the LORD. The clock would stop on Sunday morning, Av 9<sup>th</sup>, in 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar broke through the walls of the city and began to tear the Temple apart stone by stone.

(g) Look Over to Jerusalem (4:7)

**Eze 4:7 "Then you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared and prophesy against it.**

Positioned on the ground, Ezekiel was instructed to begin an attack on the City of Jerusalem. He had drawn a map of the city and placed a brick with its name in the middle of the map. All the exiles looking on knew exactly what he was doing and it infuriated them. "... with your arm bared" means Ezekiel was to roll up his sleeves and with uncovered arms begin his enactment. Without a word spoken from his mouth, his play-acting would prophesy to the exiles exactly what Nebuchadnezzar would do to Jerusalem in the future.

(h) Lash with the Ropes (4:8)

**Eze 4:8 "Now behold, I will put ropes on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege.**

Here the LORD states that He would "put ropes on" Ezekiel, but, no doubt, the ropes would be put on him by the infuriated exiles, perfectly in accordance with the LORD's will. He would not be able to turn from his right side for 390 days.



(i) Make the food (4:9)

**Eze 4:9 "But as for you, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, put them in one vessel and make them into bread for yourself; you shall eat it according to the number of the days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days."**

A year on the Hebrew calendar was 354 days. Therefore, Ezekiel was going to be bound in ropes and on the ground for more than a year. Before he began the play-acting, he had to prepare; that meant more than just gathering his props for the play, he also had to prepare and store his food for the whole 390 days. His food would be bread made from the ingredients listed in this verse.

(j) Weigh the Bread (4:10)

**Eze 4:10 "Your food which you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; you shall eat it from time to time."**

The bread would be rationed at a weight of 20 shekels per day. Twenty shekels of bread was exactly half a pound of bread per day. Ezekiel had to prepare 195 pounds of bread and preserve it for his 390-day adventure (4:9). But Ezekiel was not to bake this bread in secret, he was to bake it in their sight as he began to set up the whole scene in the village (4:12).

(k) Measure the Water (4:11)

**Eze 4:11 "The water you drink shall be the sixth part of a hin by measure; you shall drink it from time to time."**

Bread should not be eaten by itself. Ezekiel needed liquid and that would be a daily ration of water – one sixth of a hin per day. A “hin” of water equals 1.5 gallons; therefore, the LORD allowed Ezekiel to drink about a quarter of a gallon of water per day. To be prepared, Ezekiel had to bring to the scene 97.5 gallons of water for the adventure.

(l) Cook the Bread (4:12-13)

**Eze 4:12 "You shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked it in their sight over human dung." Eze 4:13 "Then the LORD said, "Thus will the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will banish them."**

The LORD told Ezekiel to cook the bread so it would be unclean – defiled. The use of human dung was prohibited under the Mosaic Law. But the LORD had a purpose in this instruction. He wanted Ezekiel to eat defiled bread as an example to the exiles; they knew they were guilty of defiling just about everything and that was why they were taken to Babylon.

(m) Request for Purity (4:14)

**Eze 4:14 "But I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth."**

Here we see that Ezekiel knew the Law of the LORD well! He respectfully questioned the LORD about consuming defiled foods. He was not being disrespectful to the LORD in any way. The LORD did not give a Law that He expected to be followed faithfully and then turn around and ask him to break that Law. This was a test for Ezekiel. Would he blindly break the LORD's

Law just because the LORD told him to do so? NO. The Law had been in place far too long and was not to be broken.

**(n) Replace the Fuel (4:15)**

**Eze 4:15 Then He said to me, "See, I will give you cow's dung in place of human dung over which you will prepare your bread."**

Ezekiel had passed the test. Human dung was off limits and his questioning of the LORD was proper. Cow dung would replace the human dung and Ezekiel could live out his life without breaking the Law of the LORD.

**(o) Present the Meaning (4:16-17)**

**Eze 4:16 Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, behold, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they will eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and drink water by measure and in horror, <sup>Eze 4:17</sup> because bread and water will be scarce; and they will be appalled with one another and waste away in their iniquity."**

In 597 BC, when the LORD was giving this vision to Ezekiel, the Southern Kingdom was in fairly good shape in Nebuchadnezzar's eyes. Zedekiah was the new king and all seemed to be going well. However, over the next 11 years, with Zedekiah's increased rebellion toward Nebuchadnezzar, resources would become scarce, especially during the time Nebuchadnezzar's army was camped outside the city wall of Jerusalem and the people could not leave in order to gather supplies. The food and water would need to be rationed and, in fact, there would not be enough to go around. Some people would starve. The ration of Ezekiel's food and water was an example to the *exiles of the house of Israel* of the dire needs that would soon be seen in Jerusalem.

**(p) Shave the Head (5:1a)**

**Eze 5:1a "As for you, son of man, take a sharp sword; take and use it as a barber's razor on your head and beard."**

In preparation for the play, Ezekiel was to shave his head and beard and keep the hair.

**(q) Divide the Hair (5:1b)**

**Eze 5:1b Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair.**

Ezekiel was then instructed to weigh the hair on a scale.

**(r) Burn in City (5:2a)**

**Eze 5:2a "One third you shall burn in the fire at the center of the city, when the days of the siege are completed."**

Ezekiel was to divide the hair into three piles by weight. The LORD instructed him to take one pile of hair and burn it at the end of the siege to represent the burning of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar had completed his victory and controlled and destroyed the city.

(s) Beat in Fields (5:2b)

Eze 5:2b **Then you shall take one third and strike *it* with the sword all around the city,**

A second pile of hair was to be spread around the city. Ezekiel was to take his sword and strike the hair to represent the fate of those who tried to run from the city and away from Nebuchadnezzar.

(t) Scatter in Wind (5:2c)

Eze 5:2c **and one third you shall scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them.**

Ezekiel was to scatter the third pile to the wind to represent those who successfully escaped from Nebuchadnezzar's attack and scattered themselves throughout the known world. That did not matter! Wherever they went, the sword of the LORD would find them and kill them and in most of the cases, the LORD would send Nebuchadnezzar to inflict the disastrous blow.

(u) Bind in Hem (5:3)

Eze 5:3 **"Take also a few in number from them and bind them in the edges of your robes.**

But Ezekiel was to sew a few of the hairs into the hem of his garment. These hairs represented those whom the LORD successfully removed from Judah for safe-keeping in the Babylonian Empire.

(v) Burn in Fire (5:4)

Eze 5:4 **"Take again some of them and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel.**

Then Ezekiel was to gather the remaining loose hairs and throw them into the fire in the middle of the city where he had thrown the first third. Those hairs represented the *house of Israel* that was already in exile, a sinful *house of Israel*, that needed correction. It was the same *house of Israel* to whom Ezekiel was presenting this play.

(5) Be an Interpreter of the Play (5:5a)

Eze 5:5a **"Thus says the Lord GOD, 'This is Jerusalem;**

Ezekiel needed to be ready to interpret the play. The story was about Jerusalem. "Thus says the LORD God." No doubt this should ever be in the minds of the audience. Jerusalem was the city to be attacked and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

(a) Her Place (5:5b)

Eze 5:5b **I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her.**

Now we come to the place of the city of Jerusalem. It sits in the center of all the nations of the world. As small as it was, Egypt wanted it but never could get it. Assyria wanted it too but had to turn away from pursuing it because of trouble on its own home front. Babylon wanted it and Nebuchadnezzar was able to get it only because the LORD appointed him for that job. The

Persian Empire had a great interest in the city as well as the Greeks and Romans. To add to all of that, every Arab nation continues to want Jerusalem to this day. They captured it during the crusades and held it long enough to build a mosque on Mount Moriah. Since the crusades, nations all around it have obsessed over the control or destruction of Jerusalem. But the city did not and does not belong to any of them, it belongs to the LORD.

#### (b) Her Rebellion (5:6)

**Eze 5:6 'But she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations and against My statutes more than the lands which surround her; for they have rejected My ordinances and have not walked in My statutes.'**

Even though Jerusalem belonged to the LORD, the city was guilty of the greatest of all rebellion against the LORD, failure to adhere to His ordinances and statutes.

#### (c) Her Judgment (5:7-8)

**Eze 5:7 "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have more turmoil than the nations which surround you *and* have not walked in My statutes, nor observed My ordinances, nor observed the ordinances of the nations which surround you,' Eze 5:8 therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I, even I, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations.**

Why was the LORD bringing His judgment upon Jerusalem? Why was Jerusalem in such turmoil, more than any other nation around it? We might rightly say that Jerusalem is still in turmoil to this day! Why? The people of this city are the very ones to whom the LORD gave his ordinances and statutes at the foot of Mount Sinai within the first two years after they were rescued from Egypt by Moses. It did not take long before these people forgot the LORD's instructions. He put up with them as long as He needed, until they were without excuse and His judgment was just. It was time for the LORD's judgment.

#### (d) Her Penalty (5:9)

**Eze 5:9 'And because of all your abominations, I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again.'**

The LORD was about to destroy Jerusalem in a way that He had never done before and will never do again. As Bible students today, we can look back through history and confirm that the LORD had never harmed Jerusalem before or after like He did when He sent Nebuchadnezzar. We also believe the rest of the Scripture that prophesies even into our future and He will never harm Jerusalem again as He did with Nebuchadnezzar. The LORD sent Nebuchadnezzar to judge Jerusalem because of the abominations practiced by the people of the Southern Kingdom and sanctioned by its leaders. Failing to adhere to the LORD's statutes and ordinances was and is an abomination but engaging and participating in some of the LORD's forbidden instructions added to the severity of the abominations she participated in. The LORD will address one now.

#### (e) Her Abomination (5:10a)

**Eze 5:10a 'Therefore, fathers will eat *their* sons among you, and sons will eat their fathers;**

During the siege of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, it was besieged by the Assyrian Empire. The Bible indicates that because of the lack of food, the people resorted to cannibalism (2 Kings 6:28-29). The people of Jerusalem had not resorted to this misery and desperation yet, but they would during Nebuchadnezzar's siege that would begin 10 years after this vision was given (Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 4:10). But the LORD knew that they would commit such an abomination and warned all the tribes not to do it (Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:53). Sadly, according to Josephus, the Jewish historian, when Titus attacked Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Jews would resort to cannibalism to survive (Josephus 6:4. § 4).

**(f) Her Sentence (5:10b)**

**Eze 5:10b for I will execute judgments on you and scatter all your remnant to every wind.**

For all the abominations of Jerusalem, the sentence was set and the judgment would come. Only a remnant would survive and they would be scattered throughout the world.

**(g) Her Loss (5:11)**

**Eze 5:11 'So as I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare.**

Ezekiel's play was to prophesy that the LORD was about to remove His protection from His people. With no protection, Jerusalem would be exposed to the powers of the world. It just so happened that the LORD would send His choice man to do the job, Nebuchadnezzar.

**(h) Her Doom by the Plague (5:12a)**

**Eze 5:12a 'One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you,**

Here, the LORD explained the three piles of hair used to portray the message to the *house of Israel*. The first third represented the rebellious who were living in the city of Jerusalem who would die by plague or famine.

**(i) Her Doom by the Sword (5:12b)**

**Eze 5:12b one third will fall by the sword around you,**

The second third represented the rebellious people who would die from the stab of a sword.

**(j) Her Doom by the Wind (5:12c)**

**Eze 5:12c and one third I will scatter to every wind, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them.**

The final third represented the rebellious people who would run away from Nebuchadnezzar to the four winds and, like fugitives, they would be found and killed by the sword.

### b) The LORD's Satisfaction (5:13-17)

**Eze 5:13 'Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them.'**

The LORD gave a promise to Ezekiel in this passage. Once Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the LORD would be satisfied and would not spill His wrath on the city again for these reasons. It would be destroyed, it would be attacked, it would be passed between nations, but not for the reasons in this passage.

#### (1) The Desolation of Jerusalem (5:14)

**Eze 5:14 'Moreover, I will make you a desolation and a reproach among the nations which surround you, in the sight of all who pass by.'**

All of this vision was just a prophecy for the future of Jerusalem. But that future would come true in eleven years. *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings*<sup>27</sup> reveals that after Nebuchadnezzar was through with Jerusalem, it lay in ruin for many years. Only a few of the poorest of the poor were allowed to remain near the city with a governor, basically a mayor, left by Nebuchadnezzar, to manage the few Jews left behind. The once great and mighty capital of Israel would be in ruins, no good for anyone for anything.

#### (2) The Reproach of Jerusalem (5:15)

**Eze 5:15 'So it will be a reproach, a reviling, a warning and an object of horror to the nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath and raging rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken.'**

As a destroyed city, Jerusalem would be an example to all the nations. When the LORD executed judgment, His judgment would look like Jerusalem. It should strike fear in the hearts of the leaders of all cities – but it would not.

#### (3) The Destruction of the Nations (5:16a)

**Eze 5:16a 'When I send against them the deadly arrows of famine which were for the destruction of those whom I will send to destroy you,'**

Here we hear another promise from the LORD. Those cities that did not learn the lesson from Jerusalem's example and chose to embrace abominations, would one day experience the wrath of the LORD in the same way He dealt with Jerusalem.

#### (4) The Famine on Nations (5:16b)

**Eze 5:16b 'then I will also intensify the famine upon you and break the staff of bread.'**

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<sup>27</sup> Wiseman, D. J., *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings*, (626-556 BC) In the British Museum, (Published by the Trustees of the British Museum, London, 1956).

The LORD continued His promise concerning the cities of the world when He basically said to Ezekiel, “*as bad as things will be for Jerusalem, it will be much worse for those who do not accept the warning from Jerusalem’s example.*”

(a) Wild Beasts (5:17a)

Eze 5:17a **'Moreover, I will send on you famine and wild beasts,**

Still speaking to the cities of the nations who did not learn the lesson from Jerusalem’s example, the LORD would add to the famine, “wild beasts.” Basically, the LORD had sent three plagues on the Jews and Gentiles of the world that He had brought judgment on. We will see these three repeated several times in Ezekiel. They are famine, pestilence and the sword. But a fourth is often added – wild beasts. When death occurs and the dead are not properly buried, wild beasts will soon arrive to feed on the carcasses of dead animals and dead humans. Such is the nature of the food chain. The defeated and deserted towns of Israel were quickly inhabited by wild beasts looking for a meal. They also sought to inhabit the abandoned structures (2 Kings 17:25). So, too, the sinful cities of the nations would be judged by the LORD with wild beasts.

(b) Bereaved Children (5:17b)

Eze 5:17b **and they will bereave you of children;**

The LORD continued His warning to the cities and nations which did not learn from Jerusalem’s example by promising that the famine and wild beasts that He will send will “bereave” or deprive the towns of children.

(c) Bloody Plague (5:17c)

Eze 5:17c **plague and bloodshed also will pass through you,**

The judgement of the LORD would be bloody as a result of the plague of famine and pestilence.

(d) Deadly Sword (5:17d)

Eze 5:17d **and I will bring the sword on you. I, the LORD, have spoken.'"**

The judgment of the LORD would also be bloody because of the deadly sword.

The second assignment had been given and explained to Ezekiel. It was now time for Ezekiel to spend the next 430 days as an actor portraying to the *house of Israel* the prophecy of the future of the capital city of Jerusalem.

**HASTINGS PARAPHRASE - PART TWO**

***And Ezekiel said ...***

I sat in the village of Tel-abib for seven days without saying a word just as the LORD told me to do. Just my being there made all the people very uncomfortable. Then, on the seventh day, the LORD spoke to me. “*Ezekiel, you are going to watch over these Israelites for Me. When I tell you what to say to them, you say it! When I tell you to tell the people they are wicked and are going to die, you tell them exactly what I said. If you do not tell them, I will put the punishment I planned for them on you. But if you tell them what I tell you to tell them, you will not be*

*punished. If they do not change their ways after you have told them what I told you to say, they will die."*

The LORD also told me that some of the good people in the village were doing bad things. He told me that the message I would tell them would cause them to stop and think about the bad things they were doing. He also warned me that if I did not tell them the message, they would keep doing bad things and would die. It did not matter that they had done good things; the bad things they were doing were worse than all the good things they had done. If I did not tell them the message from the LORD, I would be punished. But, if I told them exactly what the LORD told me, I would not be punished.

The LORD said to me, *"Ezekiel, get up and go back to the plain where I first spoke to you. There I will speak to you again!"*

I went back to the plain by the Chebar River and the glory of the LORD was there, exactly as I saw Him before. I was so amazed that I fell on my face before the LORD.

The Spirit picked me up just as He did before. The LORD told me to go to my house and get ready. What He was going to tell me to do would cause the people in Tel-abib to tie me up with ropes so I could not move.

Then the LORD told me, *"Ezekiel, your tongue is going to stick to the roof of your mouth, and you will not be able to speak unless I tell you something to say. When I tell you to say something, say it! Most of the people will not listen to you but do not worry; you tell them anyway. They are a rebellious people."*

He then told me to gather some supplies for my next task. I needed a brick that I could write the name of Jerusalem on. The brick would represent that city. I needed some things to build a ramp reaching up to the edge of the brick. The edge would represent the top of the wall of the city. I also needed a heavy log to beat against the walls and the gates. I was to put these items in front of me and act as if I was playing war games against the city of Jerusalem. Around the edges of the city, I was to place miniature camps of soldiers who would be there to destroy the city. The Israelites in Tel-abib would know exactly what I was doing even though I would not say a word.

The LORD told me I would first play war games against Jerusalem for 390 days. Each day would represent a year that the tribes of Israel sinned against the LORD. For 390 days I would lie on my left side in front of the brick and the ramp tied with ropes. Then I was to turn to my right side and lie there for 40 days. Each day would represent a year that the tribes of Judah had sinned against the LORD. The whole time I was play-acting, I was to have my sleeves rolled up allowing my arms to show.

I would need some food for the whole time I would be tied up. The LORD told me to prepare half a pound of bread and a quart of water for each day. The LORD told me to cook the bread over dried human waste. That bothered me and I told the LORD, *"I have never eaten anything unclean."* Nothing from the human body was ever to be eaten! The LORD told me I could use cow waste to cook the bread. My eating such a limited amount of food was to be a sign to the Israelites that food would be very scarce in Jerusalem and they would resort to eating unclean foods.

The LORD told me, *"Cut the hair off your head and face. Divide it into three piles. Burn one pile in the fire. Beat one pile with the sword. Scatter one pile in the wind. Sew some of the loose hairs into the hem of your robe. Tell the people around you that this is what is going to happen in Jerusalem."*

The LORD then told me that Jerusalem was surrounded by nations and the people of the city were doing really bad things against Him and His instructions. He said to me, *"because of their*