

The Visions of Ezekiel

Lesson 5

STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURE

Approximately 437 days had passed since the LORD first appeared to Ezekiel on the plain by the *Chebar River*. The LORD first appeared to Ezekiel on the 5th day of the 4th month of 597 BC. He had successfully completed two of the four assignments the LORD had prepared for him in association with the first vision. The second assignment had been given on the 12th day of the 4th month of 597 BC. It would take 430 days for Ezekiel to complete the second assignment which ended fourteen months later in the 7th month, 1st day of 596 BC. After that, the LORD called to Ezekiel with a third assignment.

9. Ezekiel's Third Assignment from the LORD (6:1-7:27)

a) The LORD's Prophecy Against Israel (6:1-2)

Eze 6:1 And the word of the LORD came to me saying, Eze 6:2 "Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them

For fourteen months Ezekiel had been silently play-acting the scene of the future destruction of Jerusalem in front of the Israelite exiles. It was now time for Ezekiel to speak words of warning from the LORD. His tongue would be unstuck from the roof of his mouth just long enough to say the exact words given to him by the LORD. Ezekiel had not left the village of Tel-abib and he was still among the exiles of the *house of Israel*. They saw him stand and look to the west as if he could see the *mountains of Israel*. Of course, he could not. Nevertheless, the exiles knew exactly what he was doing. It was a custom for the exiles to bow in prayer toward Jerusalem from anywhere in the world. The exiles on the *Chebar River* looked to the west. The run-away Jews in Egypt looked to the east. Those in the land of Sheba looked to the north and those in Gomer looked to the south. As the LORD said to Ezekiel in 5:5, Jerusalem was the center of all the nations that surrounded it. The words "Set your face toward" were the LORD's way of saying, "*Ezekiel, look toward the mountains of Israel.*" The Promised Land has many mountains but the most important are Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. Jerusalem encompassed both. One represented all the political power of the nation and the other represented all the religious power. "*Ezekiel, look toward the mountains of Israel and say what I am going to tell you to say and it is not going to be what any Israelite wants to hear.*"

b) The LORD's Message to the Mountains (6:3-8)

Eze 6:3a and say, 'Mountains of Israel, listen to the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys:

Ezekiel must have stood to his feet, looked to the west toward the *Mountains of Israel* and begun to speak the words in this verse. However, we must remember that Ezekiel would not begin this message until the LORD had finished giving the complete instruction for this assignment.

(1) The Sword Against the High Places (6:3)

Eze 6:3b "Behold, I Myself am going to bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places."

When the Scripture uses the term "high places," it is always a reference to places of worship, without exception. Furthermore, it is always a reference to false idol worship. No true worship of the living God ever took place in these "high places." Such places were built by man to worship man-made idols, carved or formed from metal, wood or stone and worshiped as if they were true living and hearing gods. You can never find a "high place" without a mountain or a hill. Furthermore, you can never find a "high place" unless it is surrounded by a ravine or a valley. It takes the ravines and valleys to recognize where a mountain or hill begins or ends. For example, the foot of the mountain is always in a valley. When the LORD says, "to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys," it is a reference to the whole land. Upon the whole land, the LORD would send a "sword." Until the advent of gun powder, a thousand years after the days of Ezekiel, the sword was the weapon of choice for every soldier in every position of every army. It is no wonder that the LORD would send the common sword to punish the *mountains of Israel*. But the punishment was to be directed at the sin of idolatry as we will see next.

(2) The Sword Against the Idolaters (6:4)

Eze 6:4 "So your altars will become desolate and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will make your slain fall in front of your idols. Eze 6:5 "I will also lay the dead bodies of the sons of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars."

The exiles watched Ezekiel make this prophecy toward the inhabitants of the mountains, hills, ravines and valleys of the Southern Kingdom. They must have known that these words from the LORD were a deadly verdict. The sword of the invaders, directed by the LORD, would slay all the Israelites in the Southern Kingdom who were bowing to the altar of idols. They would die right where they practiced their sinful worship. What was the sin? The worship of idols.

(3) The Sword Against the Dwellings (6:6-7)

Eze 6:6 "In all your dwellings, cities will become waste and the high places will be desolate, that your altars may become waste and desolate, your idols may be broken and brought to an end, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be blotted out. Eze 6:7 "The slain will fall among you, and you will know that I am the LORD."

Idol worship carried grave consequences with the LORD and still does today. When the LORD said to the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai, "Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me," He meant exactly that. The Israelites still living in the *nation of Judah*, with their capital in Jerusalem, had forgotten those words from the LORD. When Ezekiel stood to speak these words against the *mountains of Israel*, he would be hundreds of miles from the steps of the capital city of Jerusalem. Yet, the message directed at the city was more for the Israelites in Tel-abib hearing him speak. They, too, were guilty of idolatry, even in their exile. Eleven years after this prophecy the inhabitants of Tel-abib would hear of the destruction of the Southern Kingdom and the city of Jerusalem. The LORD says that then they "will know that" the LORD is the LORD!

c) The LORD's Message to the Remnant (6:8-10)

(1) A Remnant Scatters (6:8)

Eze 6:8 "However, I will leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries.

But not all of the inhabitants in the Southern Kingdom were idolaters. Some had not forgotten the command of the LORD concerning idols. Some had remained faithful to the LORD while living among the ungodly. The LORD would not allow those righteous people to live in the land any longer; they would be a remnant which means *the remains or leftovers*. When the LORD brought the destruction on the Southern Kingdom, not all would die; the leftovers who did not die would be gathered together and sent to other countries to live, countries under the control of Nebuchadnezzar. The sword would not hurt them.

(2) A Remnant Escapes (6:9a)

Eze 6:9a "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive,

The eyes of those who would be the remnant were faithfully directed to the LORD. Because of that, they would safely escape the destruction and the LORD would place them in other countries in the empire. The LORD used the words "carried captive" which is simply *shabah* in Hebrew. It means to *take away*. These captives would surely be fearful of Nebuchadnezzar when he gathered them together and relocated them to other countries; yet, when they arrived, it would become evident to them very quickly that the LORD had provided for them in wondrous ways. Their lives in exile would be better than their lives in the old home country. We should never forget that one of their own was second in charge of the new empire directed by the LORD to care for his own. His name was Daniel.

(3) A Remnant Remembers (6:9b-10)

Eze 6:9b how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations. Eze 6:10 "Then they will know that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them."

The Jews living in the Southern Kingdom could not say that they had not been warned by the LORD concerning idolatry. To the LORD, an idolater was an adulterer. To whom? To the LORD. In His eyes, when a person entered into a relationship with an idol, that was the same as a spouse being in a relationship with a person he was not married to which is an abomination to the LORD. The word "abomination" is *toebah* in Hebrew and it means *a detestable thing*. Just as adultery in a marriage is an abomination in the eyes of the LORD, so, too, adultery in worship is an abomination. In this passage we find that those who were faithful to the LORD would escape from the destruction He was sending. When it was all over, they would remember why they were saved and why the others were destroyed. Plenty of warnings were given to the Southern Kingdom and to those who ignored the warnings. When the LORD gave the warnings, they were not given in "vain." Here the Hebrew word is *chinnam* and it means *without reason, or without cause, or for no reason at all*. With the warning, the LORD would set a reckoning day to handle their rebellion. In this case, the day of disaster was still nine and a half years away.

d) The LORD's Instruction to Ezekiel (6:11-14)

(1) Gather Their Attention (6:11a)

Eze 6:11a **"Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Clap your hand, stamp your foot**

Once Ezekiel had spoken to the *mountains of Israel*, he was then to speak to the exiles in the village. To do so, he would clap his hands and stomp his feet. The LORD would have Ezekiel do this again in chapter 25 to get the attention of the exiles. It was then and is still today a gesture of strong emotion or earnest purpose.²⁸ The gesture was a way of expressing the LORD's heightened grief over the wickedness of the people. It also expressed the greatness of the affliction that would come on the Southern Kingdom. In other words, the LORD was saying, "*Clap your hand and stomp your feet Ezekiel! I want them to pay attention to you!*"

(2) Proclaim Their Abomination (6:11b)

Eze 6:11b **and say, "Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel,**

Once Ezekiel had the attention of the exiles, he was to give a message to them about their abomination. That was the reason for the LORD's coming destruction. "... because of all the evil abominations" means detestable things that they were doing in the Southern Kingdom. The LORD was speaking to the exiles in the empire so they would know why the destruction would come to the old kingdom.

(3) Decree Their Fate (6:11c-12)

Eze 6:11c **which will fall by sword, famine and plague!** Eze 6:12 **"He who is far off will die by the plague, and he who is near will fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged will die by the famine. Thus will I spend My wrath on them.**

We find nothing new in this text that we do not already know. For that matter, all of this passage had been explained when the LORD instructed Ezekiel to play-act the war games against Jerusalem. For 430 days Ezekiel laid siege against Jerusalem and portrayed the destruction by the sword, famine and plague that would come on the city. Now, in this passage, the LORD would have Ezekiel retell the story of the play in words.

(4) State Their Realization (6:13)

Eze 6:13 **"Then you will know that I am the LORD, when their slain are among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every green tree and under every leafy oak—the places where they offered soothing aroma to all their idols.**

The 430-day play would take just a few minutes to repeat to the exiles in words. When it would take place in about nine and a half years, they would remember the actions and words of Ezekiel and they would "know that" the LORD is LORD. The bodies of the slain would lie where they were killed right by the altars they had built to commit abominable acts against the LORD.

(5) Declare Their Loss (6:14)

Eze 6:14 **"So throughout all their habitations I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah; thus they will know that I am the LORD.""**

²⁸ Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Ezekiel 6:11.

All the homes, villages and towns of the wicked Israelites would be destroyed and deserted. Even “Diblah” would be more inhabited than their lands. “Diblah” was an area in Aram (Syria). It was a deserted area on the main trade route which ran from northern Assyria west into Aram, south down through the Promised Land, past the eastern side of the Dead Sea and down through the land of Midian past Mount Sinai. In this location, Nebuchadnezzar would set his camp, drag Zedekiah and his family to this area, execute his sons and put his eyes out. The Latin Vulgate translates the name of the place as *Riblah*. (Note: In Hebrew the letters for a “d” and a “r” are easily confused.) The destruction in Diblah would be great, the destruction in Jerusalem would be greater. Zedekiah was the rebellious king of the Southern Kingdom at this time and the events recorded above would occur in about nine years. When they occur, the doomed of the Southern Kingdom “will know that” the LORD is the LORD.

With that, it was time for Ezekiel to stand to his feet, turn to the west and proclaim to the *mountains of Israel* the words of the LORD. Then he turned to the exiles and told them the story he portrayed for 430 days. He then warned them that what he had explained was going to occur. With that complete, the LORD would soon give Ezekiel another assignment.

HASTINGS PARAPHRASE - PART THREE *And Ezekiel said ...*

After I had completed my task of lying on my left side for 390 days and on my right side for 40 days while playing war against the city of Jerusalem, the LORD came to me and told me to look to the mountains of Israel and tell them what they were doing wrong. What I was to say was to be directed to every mountain, hill, ravine and valley of the Promised Land. I was to open my mouth and say, “*the sword of the LORD was coming to destroy all the high places.*” On the high places were altars where incense was burned in the practice of idol worship. The LORD was going to destroy those altars and kill everyone who worshipped there. When the LORD was through with the destruction, every dwelling and city would be empty and destroyed and the altars would be crushed. Even the slain worshippers would know that the LORD was the LORD of all!

However, not everyone would die. Some would be able to escape and would be taken to live in other countries. They would be the ones who never worshipped idols. Even when they were being led away as captives, they would remember the LORD. They would remember how He was hurt by the wicked practices of the idol worshippers. The LORD had warned them that He would destroy them and He meant what He said. It was time. They would know that the LORD was LORD of all!

So the LORD told me to clap my hands and stomp my feet to get the attention of the Israelites living near me in Tel-abib. The LORD had me turn to them and tell them that those in Jerusalem were wicked and evil and were guilty of disgusting things. Because of that, they would die by the sword, starvation or disease. And it was the LORD causing all that to happen. The LORD could smell idol worship and because the people would not stop worshipping man-made idols, He was going to kill them when they came to worship at their false altars. I was to tell the people of my village that the LORD was about to stretch out His hand and wipe away the people of the Promised Land.

10. Ezekiel's Fourth Assignment from the LORD

a) The End of Security in the Land of Israel

Eze 7:1 Moreover, **the word of the LORD came to me** saying, **Eze 7:2** "And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, 'An end! The end is coming on the four corners of the land. **Eze 7:3** 'Now the end is upon you, and I will send My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways and bring all your abominations upon you.

If the words, "the word of the LORD came to me" indicate the beginning of a new assignment, we have now arrived at the fourth. This assignment warned the exiles of the "end" that was "coming on the four corners of the land." The term "four corners" always means *complete*. In this case it means *every square inch of the land of the Southern Kingdom* - not one inch would be spared. The judgment would be brought by the LORD because of the "abominations" of the people in the kingdom. This version ends the third verse with the words, "abominations upon you." The original is better translated *abominations in the midst of you*. The phrase means *the abominations will stare you in the face*. In other words, *your abominations will be the witness against you. Your abominations will be the testimony that brings the LORD's destruction upon you*. The end would come for the Southern Kingdom not because of evils from the outside, but because of evils from the inside.

b) The Absence of Pity for the Land of Israel

Eze 7:4 'For My eye will have no pity on you, nor will I spare you, but I will bring your ways upon you, and your abominations will be among you; then you will **know that I am the LORD!**'

We would think that the LORD would have pity on His people as sinners, offer grace, offer salvation, offer a reprieve, protect them and lead them to safety. We might ask "*why has the LORD not done this?*" Why is there an absence of pity for the people of the land of Israel? The answer is He had already given them chance after chance after chance after chance. The Israelites of that day would not change their ways if the LORD looked them directly in the face. The LORD knew their hearts and He was done with them. His "eye will have no pity on" them any more. He would destroy them and they deserved every bit of it! When it began, they would know that the LORD was the LORD. It would be too late for the idolaters.

c) The Disaster of Doom for the Land of Israel

Eze 7:5 "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'A disaster, unique disaster, behold it is coming! **Eze 7:6** 'An end is coming; the end has come! It has awakened against you; behold, it has come! **Eze 7:7** 'Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land. The time has come, the day is near—tumult rather than joyful shouting on the mountains.

With this passage, the LORD told Ezekiel to let the exiles know the time had come for the destruction of the Southern Kingdom. His decision was made. Nothing would change His mind. Nothing would save the people now. In the LORD's mind, the Southern Kingdom would soon experience a "unique disaster." The LORD would send four things to bring an end to the evil He had found among His people – sword, pestilence, famine, captivity. And so, the LORD would use these four to attack and destroy Israel's abominations.

d) The Anger of Wrath for the Land of Israel

Eze 7:8 'Now I will shortly pour out My wrath on you and spend My anger against you; judge you according to your ways and bring on you all your abominations.'

The exiles at Tel-abib would now hear Ezekiel repeat the words of the LORD which describe the reason for His wrath and anger. Here we come to the first reason. The LORD was going to *judge the Southern Kingdom according to the ways of the people of the kingdom and return upon them the punishment worthy of the abominations they had committed*. Here we see the LORD say this would occur “shortly” meaning *the time was near*. Looking back in history we know that the LORD would bring His wrath in about nine years.

(1) The LORD’s Eye

Eze 7:9a 'My eye will show no pity nor will I spare.'

When the LORD’s wrath came, the LORD would be relentless and halt for nothing.

(2) The LORD’s Payment

Eze 7:9b I will repay you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst;

When the LORD’s wrath came, He would catch the wicked of the Southern Kingdom in the acts, practicing the abominations He was coming to destroy.

(3) The LORD’s Smiting

Eze 7:9c then you will know that I, the LORD, do the smiting.

When the LORD’s wrath came, He would be the One destroying the kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar would be the hands of the LORD bringing about the destruction. However, Nebuchadnezzar would not be able to do anything beyond what the LORD wanted done. In the same way, Nebuchadnezzar would not do less than the LORD wanted done.

(4) The LORD’s Rod

Eze 7:10 'Behold, the day! Behold, it is coming! Your doom has gone forth; the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed. Eze 7:11 'Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness. None of them shall remain, none of their people, none of their wealth, nor anything eminent among them.'

“Behold” means *pay attention to this*. The end was coming! When the LORD said “the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed,” He meant that the rod of the LORD was prepared to strike. The “rod has budded” meant *the rod had come to life*. “Arrogance has blossomed” meant that *the sin of the Southern Kingdom was headed toward a full bloom*. “Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness” means *the violence of the Southern Kingdom was at its apex and the rod of the LORD would come to bring this wickedness to an end*. And then the LORD said, “none shall remain.” The wicked people, the wicked wealthy and the wicked famous would all see the wrath of the LORD.

(5) The LORD’s Timing

Eze 7:12a 'The time has come, the day has arrived.'

How soon would all this come to pass? “The time has come, the day has arrived.” It was in the LORD’s timing. But we must understand this, the LORD’s timing is not the same as our timing. Soon to us means in the next few days. Soon to the LORD may mean a hundred years. For the LORD to say the “day has arrived” does not necessarily mean today. It may mean a day nine years from now and that is definitely the case in this vision to Ezekiel.

(6) The LORD’s Warning

Eze 7:12b Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn; for wrath is against all their multitude. Eze 7:13 'Indeed, the seller will not regain what he sold as long as they both live; for the vision regarding all their multitude will not be averted, nor will any of them maintain his life by his iniquity. Eze 7:14 'They have blown the trumpet and made everything ready, but no one is going to the battle, for My wrath is against all their multitude.

The LORD’s warning was clear, the buyer and seller of evil would not live long enough to mourn when the LORD attacked. Their lives would come to an end and their sin would too. They could sound the alarm, blow the trumpet and proclaim that they were ready for anything, but they were not. The wrath of the LORD would come so fast that they would not be able to take one step to defend themselves.

(7) The LORD’s Promise

(a) Those Who Die

Eze 7:15 'The sword is outside and the plague and the famine are within. He who is in the field will die by the sword; famine and the plague will also consume those in the city.

The Southern Kingdom, and specifically the city of Jerusalem was doomed from without and within. As the LORD had proclaimed through Ezekiel, all the wicked who lived in the city would die by plague and famine; all the wicked who ran from the city would die by the sword.

(b) Those Who Survive

Eze 7:16 'Even when their survivors escape, they will be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each over his own iniquity.

Those who escaped the plague and famine within the city and were able to run past the sword outside the walls would know the reason why such doom had come to their country. It was their fault. It was because of their sin. Survive and escape as some would, they would grieve over their sinful acts.

(i) Their Limbs Weakened

Eze 7:17 'All hands will hang limp and all knees will become *like* water.

All the strength within the survivors would be gone. Their limbs would be as fluid as water. Weak! Unstable!

(ii) Their Dress Darkened

Eze 7:18 'They will gird themselves with sackcloth and shuddering will overwhelm them; and shame *will be* on all faces and baldness on all their heads.

Those who escaped the doom in the city and country would strip off their fancy clothing and resort to the customary dress worn when in mourning. Their faces would show their distress. The men would shave their heads as was the custom for times of grief.

(iii) Their Wealth Abhorred

Eze 7:19a 'They will fling their silver into the streets and their gold will become an abhorrent thing; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD.'

All the wealth in the possession of the wicked of the city and country could not save one person from the sword of the LORD. Gold was no good when there was nothing to buy to eat and it could not be eaten. Silver may have provided luxuries for the wealthy, but, in disaster, it could not deliver them from the force of the disaster and it was worth nothing.

(iv) Their Appetite Increased

Eze 7:19b 'They cannot satisfy their appetite nor can they fill their stomachs, for their iniquity has become an occasion of stumbling.'

When gold and silver could not buy food because no food existed, appetites grew hungrier and stomachs grew emptier and sin abounded. But sin was the reason for the coming of the LORD's wrath in the first place.

(v) Their Distortion Detested

Eze 7:20 'They transformed the beauty of His ornaments into pride, and they made the images of their abominations and their detestable things with it; therefore I will make it an abhorrent thing to them.'

What was their sin? The transformation of worship. Can worship be both good and evil? Yes. Almost everything created by the LORD can be used for good or for evil. Look back at the *tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. Was the fruit of one tree different from the fruit of the other? No. The fruit did not have to be any different from the fruit of the other trees. Why? Eating from the *tree of life* was good; eating from the *tree of good and evil* was bad. Until Adam ate from the *tree of good and evil* he had no concept of good and evil. He was basking in the life the LORD prepared for him and it was all perfect. Adam had one law, one restriction, one tree he could not eat from. Nothing has changed from that scenario today. The LORD does not change. Here is a good and evil example. The LORD's plan for the passing on of life is accomplished through the sexual process. When a man and woman marry, the sexual relationship is perfect just as life was for Adam and Eve in the garden. And so it is with a man and woman planning to be married. It is a perfect relationship. However, when they reach out and partake of the forbidden fruit before marriage, what they have done is evil. Waiting for the marriage makes the fruit good. Therefore, the fruit from the *tree of life* did not have to be a different fruit from the *tree of good and evil* – they could be the same. One was perfect, one was evil, but they both looked the same. The sexual relationship in marriage and the sexual relationship before marriage look the same. One is perfect, one is evil. What is the difference? The Law of the LORD.

The LORD instilled the same Law for worship. There was one Law about worship. Humans were to worship Him only! That worship was perfect, holy, righteous. But along the way, humans began worshipping idols. Frankly, bowing to an idol and bowing to the LORD in worship

look the same. One is perfect, one is evil. What is the difference? The Law of the LORD – “thou shalt have no other gods but Me!”

Along the way, the people of the Southern Kingdom took the items used in worship to the LORD and used them to worship imaginary gods. The transformation of worship from the true God to the gods made of wood, clay and metal was the sin. It all was an abomination to the LORD.

(vi) Their Fate Plundered

Eze 7:21 'I will give it into the hands of the foreigners as plunder and to the wicked of the earth as spoil, and they will profane it. Eze 7:22 'I will also turn My face from them, and they will profane My secret place; then robbers will enter and profane it.

The LORD had a foreigner picked out for the task at hand. We can look back in the Scripture and find his name – Nebuchadnezzar. Along with his men, Nebuchadnezzar would plunder all that the Southern Kingdom thought was holy and the LORD would turn His face away so Nebuchadnezzar would not be stricken by the LORD in His secret place, His holy place. The LORD is everywhere at all times, but Nebuchadnezzar would not see Him when he destroyed the LORD’s Temple. Neither would the robbers see the LORD when they were stealing the melted gold that dripped into the crevasse of the rocks as the Temple burned. The LORD would turn His face, and allow all this to happen.

(vii) Their Crimes Chained

Eze 7:23 'Make the chain, for the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence.

The LORD says, “Make the chain.” What does that mean? The “chain” was and is still today the symbol of captivity. The Israelites of the Southern Kingdom had chained the country with “bloody violence;” therefore, the LORD commanded the Israelites to be put in chains. It was the custom to lead prisoners away in chains and that includes captives from the kingdom. The chain would be around one neck and then the neck of the one behind and so on. Of what “bloody crimes” were they guilty? Human sacrifice was the answer. It was not mentioned here but it was surely the issue. Out in the valley of Hinnon, just south of Jerusalem, the Israelites were worshiping with child sacrifices in the belly of Chemosh while the drums beat long and loudly to drown the screams of the babies. Then, on the Sabbath, the same would be making their offerings at the Temple. For that sin the LORD says, “Make a chain” *and chain them up*.

(viii) Their Enemies Enlisted

Eze 7:24a 'Therefore, I will bring the worst of the nations, and they will possess their houses.

Who would come with the chains? It would be the “worst of the nations.” At that time, the Babylonian Empire was considered the worst of the worst nations in the world. Even Habakkuk said about this empire the following.

Habakkuk 1:^{12b} You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct. ¹³ *Your* eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness *with favor*. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they? ¹⁴ *Why* have You made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them? ¹⁵ *The Chaldeans* bring all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And

gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. ¹⁶ Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net And burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, And their food is plentiful. ¹⁷ Will they therefore empty their net And continually slay nations without sparing?

It is interesting that at the time of Ezekiel and Habakkuk, Daniel was already second in charge of the Babylonian Empire; yet, evidently, the Israelites did not recognize the great blessing bestowed on the empire because of him. When the LORD stated that He was bringing the “worst of the nations” upon the Southern Kingdom He was simply stating the sentiments of the people. Yes, the empire would take possession of the Southern Kingdom. It would also take all the personal property of the kingdom, kill the rebellious and then drag the captives away in chains.

(ix) Their Pride Ended

Eze 7:24b I will also make the pride of the strong ones cease, and their holy places will be profaned.

The time would come for the pride of the Southern Kingdom to come to an end because of the “pride of the strong ones.” The Hebrew word for “pride” means *arrogance*. The *arrogant* were the “strong ones.” The “strong ones” means the *people in power* – the Israelite leaders.

(x) Their Peace Terminated

Eze 7:25 'When anguish comes, they will seek peace, but there will be none.

Caught in the throes of Nebuchadnezzar’s attack, the Israelite leaders would then seek peace, but from whom? It would not be from Nebuchadnezzar; the leaders would seek peace from the LORD. Human nature always turns to the LORD when “anguish comes.” Even the wicked become “godly” in times of great need. It would not be any different when Nebuchadnezzar was knocking down the gates of the city. But, their quick righteousness was a little too late and the LORD would not ever grant the Israelites of the Southern Kingdom peace.

(xi) Their Cry Unanswered

Eze 7:26 'Disaster will come upon disaster and rumor will be added to rumor; then they will seek a vision from a prophet, but the law will be lost from the priest and counsel from the elders.

A little too late! When the gates broke and the Chaldeans drew near, suddenly the Southern Kingdom would reach out for the prophets, priests and elders, but they would not have an answer. No visions and no Law of the LORD would remedy the problem, save the people, or deflect the invaders. Every cry to the LORD would be unanswered.

(xii) Their Leaders Trembled

Eze 7:27a 'The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with horror, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble.

The king would be Zedekiah. Grief would overcome him. The Hebrew for “prince” is *nasi* and it is usually translated as “princes” in the Scripture. If so, these “princes” were the sons of Zedekiah. The sons would be clothed in horror when Nebuchadnezzar killed them at Diblah. When Zedekiah and his sons were taken from the capital, surely the common people would “tremble” – be distressed.

(xiii) Their Judgments Judged

Eze 7:27b **According to their conduct I will deal with them, and by their judgments I will judge them. And they will know that I am the LORD."**

The past of all the kings, princes and common people had caught up with them. Their judgments would be judged. That is, the things they had willingly done in their lives would be the standard by which the LORD would judge them. Because of the things they had done, the way they had lived and the way they had committed wicked worship, the LORD would issue His judgment on them, His people, as He would all the wicked of this world through all the ages. When the LORD judges them, "they will know that" the LORD is the LORD.

HASTINGS PARAPHRASE - PART FOUR

And Ezekiel said ...

I had completed my third task and a little later the LORD gave me another job. I was to tell the people in my village that it was time for Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom to be destroyed because of the people's idol worship. The LORD was angry with the people there and all of the people in the land would be punished. It was my job to tell those listening to me that the LORD would not have any pity for the people of the Promised Land. Their disgusting worship had made the LORD angry. The day of their destruction was near.

When the LORD arrived in Jerusalem to punish the people, their sin would stare them in the face. They would not be able to run from their sin. They would remember their sin and know why they were being punished. They would also know that the punishment was being done by the LORD. I was to tell the people, "*Pay attention to this! The sin of the wicked had grown into a whipping board of wickedness and the LORD was going to use it to punish them. Nothing could save them.*" The LORD's warning was to be clear; there was not enough money in the world to save them. The trumpet was about to blow and the wrath of the LORD was about to arrive, but not one of them would be able to go to the battle because it would happen so fast.

The LORD told me to tell them that in Jerusalem, the sword was waiting outside to kill them and inside, starvation and disease were already killing them. All their strength was gone. They had taken off their fancy clothing and put on their old clothes and had begun to shake in fear. Some of them pulled out their hair to show their grief. All the gold and silver they had was no good to them because there was no food to buy and stomachs were empty – all because of their sin.

What was their sin? They had taken the elements of true godly worship and used it to worship gods of their own making. That made the LORD really mad. For that, the LORD was sending the leader of the worst nation in the world to destroy them. He would put them in chains and lead them away to other countries to live all because of the bloody crime of idol worship.

All the leaders of the Promised Land would lose their positions of power. They would seek peace from the LORD but no one would get peace from Him. They would seek a preacher, a teacher and a counselor for help, but not one of them could help. The king of the Promised Land would grieve. His sons would die and his people would tremble. And, according to their sin, the LORD would punish them and they would know that the LORD was the LORD of all.