



Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 12

*Theme: Ezekiel continues to proclaim that
judgment is, imminent,
but the people will not believe.*

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Theme: Ezekiel continues to proclaim that judgment is, imminent, but the people will not believe.

Missler Review:

Ezekiel was trained as a priest, but called to the office of a prophet at a time in the history of Israel in which they were partially in captivity. He and His friends were already in Babylon, but Ezekiel was preaching to those who were still back in Jerusalem, who felt their troubles were only temporary, who did not really perceive the inevitability of God's impending judgment on them. God was using Ezekiel not just to talk to those of Judah. There is the possibility that he may here be talking to us as well, in terms of the idols that we worship, and the false prophets that compete for our ears.

Israel heard so much preaching of judgment they became skeptical. They refused to believe judgment would come in their generation. Ezekiel called for a turn away from skepticism. God would bring judgment immediately. Israel learned God's Word is true. God judges a disobedient people. Ignoring God's Word does not allow one to escape the historical reality of the judgment He announces.¹

BKC: The futility of false optimism (Chapters 12-19)

Ezekiel's task (chaps. 4-11) had been to show the necessity of Jerusalem's judgment because of her disobedience. He had demonstrated the fact of the siege through a series of signs, and then he explained the reason for the siege through two messages and an extended vision. However, the people were still not ready to accept the fact of Jerusalem's fall. Therefore Ezekiel gave a new series of signs and messages. Any optimism would be futile; Jerusalem's fate had been sealed.

Ezekiel used the clause, "The word of the LORD came to me," in introducing 10 of the 11 signs, sermons, and proverbs in chapters 12-19 (12:1, 17, 21; 13:1; 14:2, 12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1). The only variation is the final section (19:1), but this is a lament which seems to sum up the entire section's theme.

a. Two signs about impending captivity (12:1-20)

Ezekiel gave two more action-signs because of the people's unbelief. He said, "They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear." Israel's blindness and deafness was willful. They had the faculties for receiving God's message, but they chose not to receive it because they were "a rebellious house" (v. 3; cf. comments on 3:9). Blindness and deafness often indicate disobedience or disbelief (cf. Deut. 29:1-4; Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 5:21; Matt. 13:13-15; Acts 28:26-28).²

OTS: Two action parables underscored the trauma which Ezekiel predicted would characterize the final days of Jerusalem. The need for dramatic actions and not mere rhetoric was clear. Ezekiel was living in the midst of a "rebellious house." These people had eyes, but they refused to analyze the desperate situation of Jerusalem. They had ears,

¹ Discipole's Study Bible

² Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 11:22-25). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

but they refused to listen to the prophetic warnings. Ezekiel's action parables had shock value which might penetrate the mental barrier which this rebellious house had erected in order to shield themselves from unpleasant realities (12:1f.).³

Constable: This section contains three messages from the Lord all of which deal with the inevitability of another deportation of Jews from Jerusalem and Judah (vv. 1-7, 8-16, 17-20). Jerusalem would be overthrown and the Jews still there would be taken to Babylon in the very near future. The prophet's perspective now broadened from the temple (chs. 8—11) to the city (ch. 12).⁴

Ezekiel 12:1

The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,

Dake: [The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying ...] The 13th prophecy of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:1-6, fulfilled). Next is in Ezekiel 12:8. This was a pantomime but the acts were prophetic, so they are listed as predictions in the following:

Nine Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. Prepare your stuff for moving (Ezekiel 12:3).
2. Remove by day in their sight.
3. Remove from your place to another in their sight.
4. Bring forth your stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing (Ezekiel 12:4).
5. Go forth at even in their sight, as they that go into captivity.
6. Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry your stuff out thereby (Ezekiel 12:5).
7. You shall bear it upon your shoulders in their sight (Ezekiel 12:6).
8. Carry it forth in the twilight.
9. You will cover your face and not see the ground, for all these actions are prophetic of the captivity of Israel.

LAN: Ezekiel played the role of a captive being led away to exile, portraying what was about to happen to King Zedekiah and the people remaining in Jerusalem. The exiles knew exactly what Ezekiel was doing because only six years earlier they had made similar preparations as they left Jerusalem for Babylonia. This was to show the people that they should not trust the king or the capital city to save them from the Babylonian army—only God could do that. And the exiles who hoped for an early return from exile would be disappointed. Ezekiel's graphic demonstration was proven correct to the last detail. But when he warned them, many refused to listen.⁵

BKC: 1-6. Here Ezekiel's sign to Israel involved two separate actions. In the first action he packed his belongings and went to another place as the exiles watched him. The people recognized the meaning of that action because six years earlier they had made similar preparations for their own deportation to Babylon.

³ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 12:1–20). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

⁴ Dr. Thomas Constable Notes on Ezekiel 2010

⁵ Life Application Bible Notes

This first action in the daytime was followed by a second action in the evening. While the people watched, Ezekiel was to pretend he was being taken captive and was to dig through the wall and take his belongings (cf. v. 4) out through it, carrying them on his shoulder. As Ezekiel pantomimed before the people a furtive escape attempt he was also to cover his face so that he could not see the land.

12:7-11. Ezekiel performed the actions as he was commanded. Next morning God spoke to him again, this time asking him if the exiles inquired what he was doing. Evidently the people's curiosity was aroused. Once Ezekiel had their attention he could deliver God's message.

God explained that this oracle (message) concerned the prince in Jerusalem (i.e., King Zedekiah) and the whole house of Israel who were there (i.e., in Jerusalem, v. 10). This first part of Ezekiel's sign pictured the inevitability of the exile: they will go into exile as captives. Those at ease in Jerusalem would soon be exiles whose only possessions could be held in small sacks flung over their backs.

McGee: Five times in this chapter (vv. 1, 8, 17, 21, and 26), Ezekiel says, "The word of the LORD came unto me, saying." Do you get the impression that Ezekiel is trying to tell these people that he is giving them the Word of the Lord? He is giving them nothing short of that.⁶

ESV: 1–16 Ironically, the issue of perception lies at the heart of this passage. Ezekiel's fellow exiles form the audience whose attitude, one must conclude, remained untouched by their own experience of exile and whose expectations were therefore deluded.

ESV: 1–28 Anticipating Exile. The unfolding of events surrounding the collapse of Judah must always be borne in mind when reading Ezekiel. This is especially true for this chapter, as its predictions of exile come during a time when the exile has already begun. This only makes sense in the context of the uncertain decade between 597 b.c. (the deportation during the reign of Jehoiachin, during which Ezekiel was exiled) and 586 (the final fall of Jerusalem, during the reign of Zedekiah). It is the latter complex of events toward which these oracles point. Formulaic markers group them into two pairs: symbolic action is again a vehicle for the divine word in vv. 1–16 and 17–20; the passage of time prompted doubts about this further exile, and these are confronted in the pair of oracles in vv. 21–25 and 26–28.

ESV: 1–20 Exile Predicted. Ezekiel, who was included in the first deportation to Babylon, predicts a further exile by means of symbolic actions, much like chs. 4–5.

Chuck Smith: Now, you remember, Isaiah said the same thing, "Having eyes to see, they see not; ears to hear, they hear not; least at any time they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and be saved" (Isaiah 6:10). Jeremiah accused them of the same thing, "You don't see, you don't hear." David said, "They that are worshipping the idols have become like unto the idols, which cannot see, which cannot move, which cannot hear."

⁶ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 12:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So, Jesus said, "Well saith Isaiah the prophet concerning this generation having eyes to see they will not see, ears to hear, they will not hear."

Now, the Lord is saying, "You're in a rebellious house." The interesting thing is that as the Jews look back upon their fathers and upon their history, they always do it with extremely great pride. They really honor their fathers; they honor the dead; they honor their heritage.

And that's where Stephen got into trouble. For as Stephen was standing before the Sanhedrin and he was rehearsing their history to them, telling them all that God had done, relating to them the illustrious history of their fathers, he finally said, "Which of the prophets of God did not your fathers kill? You know, you'd say, 'Oh our fathers, our fathers, so honor.' Hey, they killed every prophet God sent to them. And now you are even worse than they are, because you've killed the One that they all prophesied concerning." That was when they got so angry that they began to gnash their teeth; they grabbed rocks and began to throw them at him and they stoned him to death. Paul the apostle was right there holding their coats, encouraging them on.

Now here is God saying to Ezekiel, "Look, you're dwelling in the midst of a rebellious people. They have eyes but they will not see, ears but they will not hear, for they are rebellious."⁷

Constable 1-2: The Lord came to Ezekiel with another message. Because it is not dated, and because the book follows a chronological sequence of events, most commentators believed that this word from the Lord came to Ezekiel shortly after he received the vision in chapters 8—11. God told His servant that the people among whom he lived, the house of Israel, were rebellious against Him (cf. 2:3-8). Their blindness to the things that they saw and their deafness to His words, after over a year of Ezekiel's ministry, were the result of their rebellious condition (cf. Deut. 29:1-4; Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 5:21; Matt. 13:13-15; Mark 8:18; John 12:39-40; Acts 28:26-27).

Sin blinds the heart and mind. Like Samson, who could not see that his chosen path was leading to the loss of his ministry, the sinner does not see the ultimate consequences of sin that produces death and destruction (Judg 13—16; cf. . . . Isa 6:9-13; Rom 6:23).

Ezekiel 12:2

Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they *are* a rebellious house.

Missler: Once the Pharisees accused Jesus of working His miracles by the power of Satan, He began withholding His message from them. That led to the 7 Kingdom Parables of Mt 13 where the disciples asked Him why He started speaking in parables. In His answer He quoted from Ezk 12:2 and Jer 5:21. Cf. Mt 13:11, 15 [For a complete study of these parables see Missler commentary on *Matthew*.] Let us not fall into the same trap Israel did in terms of their spiritual deafness and blindness.

⁷ Chuck Smith, Notes on Ezekiel, Paastor, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa CA

The next several chapters shows God going the extra mile, knowing that their hearts were hardened, and that they would not hear, but using Ezekiel as a mechanism to prove that He would be righteous when He judged them.⁸

Clarke: Which have eyes to see, and see not—It is not want of grace that brings them to destruction. They have eyes to see, but they will not use them. No man is lost because he had not sufficient grace to save him, but because he abused that grace.⁹

Nelson: The exiled community among whom Ezekiel was ministering was described twice as **a rebellious house**. This is further defined by the phrases: **eyes to see ... and ears to hear** (Isa. 6:10). The Israelites' hardness of heart was sustained for over a year (see 1:1, 2; 8:1). They would not listen to the prophet's words or his dramatizations of coming judgment (chs. 4–6).¹⁰

McGee: Of course, God had warned Ezekiel before about these people, but He is reminding him because Ezekiel may get discouraged. God said way back at the beginning of Israel's history, "Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deut. 29:4). These people had their eyes closed and their ears stopped. Ezekiel was not the only prophet who confirmed this truth about these people—Isaiah (Isa. 6:9–10) and Jeremiah (Jer. 5:21) did also. In addition, the Book of Acts closes with this statement: "Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Acts 28:26–27). These people had closed eyes and ears.

Today, when people say they cannot believe, it is not a mental problem, it is a matter of the will of the heart—they do not *want* to believe. Some say they have certain "mental reservations," mental hurdles which they cannot get over. My friend, your mind is not big enough to take even one little hurdle. The problem is never in the mind but in the will. There is sin in the life and a man does not want to turn to God; he does not want to believe Him.

Israel is just a miniature of the world; that is, the condition of Israel described here is the condition of the world today. In her spirit of unbelief she was a little microcosm of the entire world. That is why we need to look carefully at what the Book of Ezekiel has to say.

I remember talking to a college professor who told me that he appreciated my ministry and what I had to say about the Bible, but that he had certain mental reservations. I had to bite my tongue—I do not believe he was so far ahead of me intellectually that he could see so much more than I! You know what his real problem was? He was having an affair with a former student from one of his classes. *She* was his "intellectual problem"—he did not want to forsake the sin in his life. Blindness in part had happened in Israel, and this is true of our world today.

⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, khouse.org

⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

¹⁰ The Nelson Study Bible

Because of Israel's unbelief, Ezekiel is not only going to give the people a parable, he is actually going to act it out. Ezekiel was a very brilliant man, but I think he also had a real sense of humor. I would love to have seen his face when he went through some of these mechanics! I think he might have been somewhat of a ham actor and been greatly amused as he did these things.

ESV: On Ezekiel's distinctive use of **rebellious house** (also vv. 9, 25), see note on 2:5-7. The unseeing **eyes** and unhearing **ears** emphasize the willfulness of the exiles' ignorance (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 5:21).

Ezekiel 12:3

Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they *be* a rebellious house.

Missler: Ezekiel was about to act out in pantomime in a public place so they would know he was acting out a message.

[**stuff for removing**] is an Old English term for relocation, changing your address.

Clarke: Prepare thee stuff for removing—Get carriages to transport thy goods to another place; signifying by this the captivity that was at hand.

1-7 God told Ezekiel to pack a rucksack with bare necessities and leave his house in broad daylight. He was to do the same at twilight, acting as if he were escaping by crawling through a hole in the wall.¹¹

The term “rebellious house” is applied to the exiles, who obviously were convinced that there would be an early return to Jerusalem. To get the attention of his people, Ezekiel resorts to his symbolic language by acting out the tragic fate of Zedekiah in the Exile (cf. 2 Kin 25:4-7), followed by the acting out of the fate of the people (vv. 17-20; cf. 4:9-12).¹²

The “belongings” refers to the packing of the baggage of the exiles in preparation for moving. The exiles would only be able to take the bare necessities. Ezekiel packed and carried his baggage in public view as a testimony concerning Jerusalem's approaching captivity.

Nelson: 3-7 Ezekiel's next visual demonstration warned the captives already in Babylon that they should not expect a quick return to Jerusalem. He had already shown that the city would soon fall (chs. 4; 5); those not killed would be led into exile. These exiles should have understood Ezekiel's meaning, for they had done what he was displaying only six years before, when they had been brought into exile. **a sign:** The term here does

¹¹ Ryrie Study Bible Notes

¹² Believer's Study Bible

not mean a miracle but a visible symbol (see v. 11; 24:24, 27). **I did as I was commanded:** In contrast to the inattention and disobedience of the people, God's prophet Ezekiel was always obedient to Him (see chs. 2–5).

McGee 3-6: I tell you, this is a good one! Here's what Ezekiel does: He goes into his house (the houses then were right on the street, by the way); he packs his baggage like he's going on a trip, digs through the wall, and comes up out in the street. You can imagine the effect that would have—a man coming out through the wall bringing his suitcases with him! People would have to stop and look.

Here in Pasadena, California, where I live, digging up the street is not anything new. Actually, the city here plays a game with all of us. They dig up one street, and so you decide to get smart and use another street. So the next day they find out what new street you're using, and then they go dig up that street too! It gets to be quite a puzzle, like a maze, finding your way around dug—up streets. But I have a notion that when this man Ezekiel came up in the middle of the street with his suitcase, it was something new, and people stopped to ask, "Where are you going? What's the big idea?" Ezekiel had an answer for them:

ESV: In their sight is repeated seven times in vv. 3–7, further underlining the main point of the prophecy. The hope that they will understand (lit., that they will "see") also develops this theme.

OTS Parable of the Fugitive (12:3–17).

For his action parable Ezekiel needed a prop. He was told to prepare for himself "baggage for exile," i.e., such things as one might be permitted to take into exile. In the presence of his daily visitors he was to stage a deportation. He was to take the meager items of exile baggage and move from his own house to another place. Perhaps this action would make this rebellious people realize that those left in Jerusalem would shortly be joining those who had been deported to Babylon (12:3).

Ezekiel was to prepare his baggage by day before the eyes of his audience. That evening he was to assume the role of an exile. He was to dig through his clay courtyard wall and carry his baggage through the hole that evening. Then he was to carry his baggage over his shoulder through the dark. He was to cover his face, probably with some cloth, as he made his mock trip. In doing all of these things Ezekiel would be a *sign* to the house of Israel. As always, the prophet obeyed these directions and performed the symbolic act (12:4–7).

In the morning Ezekiel received a divine revelation which explained his actions of the previous night. His auditors had been asking for the meaning of what they had witnessed. This "burden," i.e., prophetic oracle, had an application both to the "prince in Jerusalem," i.e., Zedekiah, and to his subjects. Ezekiel was a sign to testify that those who dwelled in Jerusalem would do in reality what he had done in symbol. They would go into captivity (12:8–11).

The prince also would become a captive. He would try to escape from the city at night through a hole in the wall. His face would be covered so that he would not be able to see the land. He may have worn a hood over his head to shield his identity from those of his own people who might wish to kill him for prolonging the agonies of Jerusalem. His efforts, however, would not be successful. The Lord would see to it that Zedekiah

was ensnared. He would be brought to land of the Chaldeans. Yet he would not *see* Babylon, though he would die there. His aides and personal bodyguards would “scatter to every wind” when the “sword” of the Lord, i.e., the Chaldean soldiers, began to pursue them (12:12–14). The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in the Book of Kings. Zedekiah fled from Jerusalem at night once the Chaldeans had made a breach in the walls. He was captured in the plains of Jordan. He was taken to Riblah, his eyes were blinded, and he was deported to Babylon in chains (2 Kgs 25:4–6).

The deportation to Babylon would cause the Jews to have a true understanding of the nature of God. The remnant which God spared from sword, famine, and pestilence had a mission to perform in their exile. Among the heathen these would openly confess all of their abominations, the folly of their addiction to idolatry. Through their testimony the heathen also would come to know the true nature of Yahweh (12:15f.).

Chuck Smith: Now, they're rebelling; they're thinking that they are going to go back right away from this captivity. They've listened to the false prophets, but you just move your stuff from one place to another, you know, just pack up your duds, pack your suitcases and just move around with your suitcases, because maybe they will hear even though they are rebellious.

Constable 3-4: The Lord instructed Ezekiel to perform another symbolic act. He was to pack his bags during the daylight hours as though he were going into exile. Thus he would probably have packed only the barest necessities. He was then to leave his present home and depart for another place in the evening, when the other exiles could observe what he was doing. Perhaps this would teach them how rebellious they were. 'Perhaps' is God's sigh, rather than a threat.

Ezekiel 12:4

Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

Missler: In other words, this was symbolic to indicate they were going to be fleeing the city to try to avoid capture. He was trying to separate them from their complacency. They knew their city was under vassal rule, but they had the attitude that it was just temporary and things would get better. So they were not listening to the prophets, neither to Jeremiah nor Ezekiel.

Chuck Smith 4-6: Now, this is going to be a little illustrated message, Ezekiel, that you're going to carry to the house of Israel. Pack your suitcases, dig a hole in the wall, and crawl out with your suitcases. Carry them on your shoulders and just walk around from one place to another. Move out from your house.

Ezekiel 12:5

Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

Missler: He was pretending to escape by digging under the wall and carrying this baggage with him, acting out the idea that they would not be leaving by the gate but would be fleeing, trying to escape.

Clarke: Dig thou through the wall—This refers to the manner in which Zedekiah and his family would escape from the city. They escaped by night through a breach in the wall. See Jeremiah 39:2-4; and 2 Kings 25:4.

Constable 5-6: He was to dig a hole in the sun-dried mud brick wall of his house (Heb. *qir*), perhaps the wall around the courtyard of his house, as the people watched, and pass through it. This unusual method of departure pictured desperation and secrecy. He should load his baggage on his shoulder and carry it away as night set in. He was also to cover his face so he could not see the land. This may represent the inability of the exiles to see their land any more or his shame at having to depart or his attempt to conceal himself from the enemy. He was to do all this because God was using him as a lesson to the Jews.

Ezekiel 12:6

In their sight shalt thou bear *it* upon *thy* shoulders, *and* carry *it* forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee *for* a sign unto the house of Israel.

Clarke: Thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground—Referring to the blinding of Zedekiah: even the covering of the face might be intended to signify that in this way Zedekiah should be carried to Babylon on men's shoulders in some sort of palanquin, with a cloth tied over his eyes, because of the recent wounds made by extracting them. All the prophecies from this to the twentieth chapter are supposed to have been delivered in the sixth year of Zedekiah, five years before the taking of Jerusalem. How accurate the prediction! and how exactly fulfilled!

Ezekiel 12:7

And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought *it* forth in the twilight, *and* I bare *it* upon *my* shoulder in their sight.

Chuck Smith 7-9: And that was, of course, the purpose--to create a question. Doing this, he wasn't saying anything, covered his face, and carrying his stuff around after having dug the hole through the wall and said, "What in the world are you doing?"

Constable: Ezekiel did all that the Lord had commanded him. During the day he assembled the few things that a person would take into exile and bound them up for carrying. That evening he dug a hole through his wall with his hands. As night fell, he

went out through the hole in the wall as the people watched. Zedekiah and many other Jerusalemites tried to escape from the city at night (Jer. 52:7). The fact that Ezekiel went out at night may also represent the dark conditions that would exist for Israel when the final exiles departed from Jerusalem (cf. John 13:30).

Ezekiel 12:8

And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

Dake: [And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying ...] The 14th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:8-16, fulfilled). Next, [□]Ezekiel 12:17. This burden concerned the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel (Ezekiel 12:10).

Eleven Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. Like as I have done, so shall it be done to them (Ezekiel 12:10-11).
2. They will go into captivity.
3. The prince that is among them will bear upon his shoulder in the twilight and go forth (Ezekiel 12:12).
4. They will dig through the wall to carry out thereby.
5. He will cover his face, that he will not see the ground.
6. My net also will I spread upon him, and he will be taken in a snare (Ezekiel 12:13).
7. I will bring him to Babylon, yet he will not see it, though he will die there.
8. I will scatter all that are with him to the four winds (Ezekiel 12:14).
9. They will know that I am Jehovah when I scatter them among the nations and disperse them into the countries (Ezekiel 12:15).
10. I will leave a few from the sword, famine, and pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen where they go (Ezekiel 12:16).
11. They will know that I am Jehovah.

McGee: 8-12 Zedekiah was on the throne in Jerusalem, and the false prophets were saying to the captives, “Look, Nebuchadnezzar has made two sieges of Jerusalem, and he’s carried away captives, but he did not destroy the city, he did not burn the temple, and he did not execute the king. You are going to be able to return soon. There’s nothing to worry about.” But Ezekiel says, “I have news for you: What I have just done is a picture of what is happening back in Jerusalem. The king over there, the prince (that’s Zedekiah), thinks he’s very clever. He thinks he will be able to slip out of the city during the siege, but he won’t. When he leaves the city, he won’t even see the ground.”

Do you know why Zedekiah didn’t see the ground? Read the historical record in 2 Kings 25:1–7; Nebuchadnezzar put out his eyes. Zedekiah was a deceptive, wicked fellow, and he had broken his treaty with Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king, was more honorable than the man on Israel’s throne. There is nothing that hurts the church more today than a dishonest Christian, particularly when it is a layman who is active in the Lord’s work but in the business world has a poor reputation. Zedekiah was like that, and Ezekiel’s message was a bitter pill for those captives to swallow when the false prophets had said, “It’s so wonderful back in Jerusalem.”

ESV 8–15: The explanation of the symbolic actions has both a broad and a narrow application. Verse 10 targets the prince in Jerusalem—a reference to Zedekiah, whom Ezekiel resolutely refuses to refer to as “king”—while the rest of v. 10 and the plural references of v. 11 broaden the scope to the rest of the remaining Judeans. Verses 12–15 point in specific detail to the fate of Zedekiah narrated in 2 Kings 25, much as did the oracle of Ezek. 11:5–12. Still, this remains a sign for you (plural, 12:11), that is, for Ezekiel's fellow exiles.

Constable 8-9: The morning after Ezekiel had performed this little drama the Lord spoke to him again. He reminded His servant that the Jews had asked him to interpret his symbolic acts.

Ezekiel 12:9

Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?

[**What doest thou?** This is question 9 in Ezekiel The next question is in Ezekiel 12:22.

Nelson 9-10: Ezekiel’s audience was composed of people who had already experienced exile; but the people were so rebellious and so resistant to the message they continued disdainfully to ask the prophet, **What are you doing? The prince in Jerusalem** was Zedekiah (vv. 12–14), the ruler of Judah (2 Kin. 24:17–20). **burden:** The message a prophet proclaimed is often called a burden (see Isa. 13:1; 15:1).

Ezekiel 12:10

Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them.

Missler: Jehoiachin, the true king, was never deposed by the Babylonians, they just replaced him with Zedekiah to be their deputy. That is why Ezekiel never referred to him as “king.” The “prince in Jerusalem” in Ezekiel’s text here was Zedekiah, whose ultimate rebellion resulted in the final fall of the city and the remaining ones being taken captive. All the way through here, whenever Ezekiel speaks of “the prince,” he means Zedekiah.

[**prince in Jerusalem**] Zedekiah, king of Judah (2 Kings 24:17).

Clarke: This burden—This prediction concerning the prince. By this I point out the capture, misery, and ruin of Zedekiah.

Chuck Smith 10-11: And now, what you've seen me do is what's happening to the princes back in Jerusalem. They are going to dig a hole in the wall and they are going to try to escape with their stuff.

Constable: Ezekiel was to explain to them that the oracle that he had delivered by his

acted parable concerned King Zedekiah and the Jews who were in Jerusalem. Ezekiel regarded King Jehoiachin as the legitimate king of Judah, and he referred to Zedekiah as only a prince (Heb. *nasi'*, leader) because Nebuchadnezzar had set him on the throne. "Prince," however, was one of Ezekiel's titles for Judah's kings. Many of the Jews and the Babylonians also continued to view Jehoiachin as the true king of Judah.

Ezekiel 12:11

Say, I *am* your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove *and* go into captivity.

Nelson 11-14: Speaking in 592 B.C., Ezekiel predicted the deportation of Jerusalem's population to Babylon six years later, and prophesied exactly what would happen to their leader Zedekiah. The king would attempt to escape by night, secretly and in disguise (**cover his face**); but he would be caught and blinded by the Babylonians, then carried off to Babylon where he would die (see 2 Kin. 25:1-7; Jer. 52:1-11). Ezekiel was a **sign** to his audience already in exile as he symbolically and verbally foretold the fate of the Jews still living in Jerusalem. The **land of the Chaldeans** is Babylonia.

Constable 11-12: Ezekiel was to explain to his audience that he was a sign to them of others who would go into captivity. He was not representing his fellow exiles who would leave Babylon and return to Judea. He represented what Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem would do. Zedekiah would try to escape under cover of darkness through a hole in a wall with his face covered to make himself unrecognizable (cf. 2 Kings 25:4-6; Jer. 39:4-5; 52:7-8).

Ezekiel 12:12

And the prince that *is* among them shall bear upon *his* shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with *his* eyes.

[cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes] This refers to Zedekiah being made blind and carried to Babylon to die there without seeing the place of his captivity with his eyes (Ezekiel 12:12-13; 2 Kings 25:7).

Chuck Smith 12-13: Now, an interesting prophecy concerning Zedekiah the king. He is going to, in the evening twilight hours, dig a hole through the wall and try to escape. But he's going to get caught in the snare, in the net, and he is going to be brought to Babylon, but he won't see it. We have the record of the scriptures that Zedekiah one night tried to escape from Jerusalem, from the siege of the Babylonian army, and he got as far as the plains, down near Jericho, where the Chaldeans caught up with him and captured him. And they took him to Nebuchadnezzar, that was at Riblah, and Nebuchadnezzar there took his sons who tried to escape with him and he killed them in the eyes of Zedekiah (Zedekiah was watching) and then he put out Zedekiah's eyes. And he was taken to Babylon. And so, as Ezekiel predicted, so it happened. He came to Babylon, but he never

saw Babylon, because his eyes were put out. Again, God's amazing prophetic word, as God speaks of events and those servants of God speak of events, which it would be impossible to do with such accuracy, unless they spoke as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 12:13

My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

Missler: In Antiquities x.7.2, Josephus describes Zedekiah as making fun of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah preached against him so much that Zedekiah threw him in prison. Then he ridiculed Ezekiel by pointing out the “discrepancy” of his prophecy, that how could he go to Babylon and still not see it?

2 Kings 25:1-10

1] And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. 2] And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

Missler: Here the chronicler calls him “king” however, it was Ezekiel who never conveys that title; he always referred to him as “prince.” Ezekiel was more precise, more technically accurate.

3] And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. 4] And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king’s garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. 5] And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. 6] So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. 7] And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. 8] And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9] And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man’s house burnt he with fire. 10] And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

Missler: So Zedekiah, because of his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, was brought to Riblah. His sons were executed before his eyes, and then he was blinded, partly as punishment, and partly to make sure he would never rule again. The irony of that, of course, is not lost upon us as we review verse 13 where Ezekiel forecast that even though he would be brought to Babylon and die there, yet he would not see it. Zedekiah did die in Babylon, yet he never “saw” it.

God is literal. When Daniel read Jeremiah who spoke of the 70 years of captivity, Daniel took Jeremiah literally, not allegorically nor figuratively. Every time Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, he quoted it literally. Every time you see the Word of God applied by another servant of God in the Scripture, you will notice that it is always literal.

Back to Ezekiel Chapter 12

Clarke: I will bring—him to Babylon—yet shall he not see it—Because Nebuchadnezzar caused him to have his eyes put out at Riblah. To Babylon he was carried in his blind state, and there he died. In saying, My net also will I spread upon him, there is probably a reference to an ancient manner of fighting. One, who was called the retiarius, had a small casting net, which if he could throw over his antagonist's head, he then dispatched him with his sword; if he missed his throw, he was obliged to run in order to get his net once more adjusted for another throw. In the mean time the other pursued him with all his speed to prevent this, and to dispatch him; hence he was called secutor: the first the netman, the second the pursuer.

BKC: 12-16. The second part of Ezekiel's sign (in vv. 5-6) pictured Zedekiah's vain escape attempt. He would try to escape at dusk from Jerusalem through a breach in the city wall. However, he would be caught in God's snare. Zedekiah's escape attempt would fail because God would make sure he was captured. The final destiny of Zedekiah was grim. I will bring him to Babylonia ... but he will not see it, and there he will die. His troops who would try to escape with him would be pursued and killed by the sword.

All this was dramatically and accurately fulfilled in 586 B.C. After a futile escape attempt Zedekiah was taken to Nebuchadnezzar, forced to watch the enemy kill his sons, and then blinded and carried off to Babylon where he spent the rest of his life in prison (cf. 2 Kings 25:1-7; Jer. 52:4-11).

Those in Jerusalem would ultimately realize the sovereignty of God (Ezek. 12:15-16), but that knowledge would come only after they were dispersed among the nations. And yet, as God had said, He would spare a few of them (cf. 6:8).

(2) The sign of trembling while eating and drinking.

ESV: he shall not see it. The fate of Zedekiah is clearly in view here: cf. 2 Kings 25:7; Jer. 52:11.

Constable: Nevertheless the Lord would snare Zedekiah like a bird in a net and would bring him to Babylon. Ancient art pictured deities as hunting and snaring their enemies.²¹² Yet Zedekiah would not see the land of Babylon even though he would die there (cf. 2 Kings 25:5, 7; Jer. 39:6-7; 52:8, 10-11).

Josephus wrote that Zedekiah heard about this prophecy by Ezekiel but did not believe it because it seemed to contradict Jeremiah's prophecy about what would happen to him. This apparent contradiction was the reason Zedekiah gave for rejecting both prophecies. Both prophecies proved true: the Chaldeans took Zedekiah to Babylon, but he never saw the country because Nebuchadnezzar blinded him at Riblah.

Ezekiel 12:14

And I will scatter toward every wind all that *are* about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

Dake: [scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands] The army of Zedekiah was scattered and destroyed, all but a very few (Ezekiel 12:14-16; 2 Kings 25:4-7).

God again promises to leave a few of them, but they are going to be slain, most of them.

Constable 14-15: The Lord would also scatter the Jews who accompanied, assisted, and tried to defend Zedekiah in his escape and would pursue them with a sword as they fled to other nations.

Ezekiel 12:15

And they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

Dake: [when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries] The regrettable thing is that they would not recognize Jehovah before the nation was totally destroyed and gone into captivity (Ezekiel 12:15-16).

Nelson 15-16: The LORD translates God's personal name. It appears in this prophecy to indicate God's special relationship to the Israelites. Ezekiel instructed the exiles that their difficult situation did have a purpose. God would use it to demonstrate that He was a personal, caring Lord. Its aim was corrective and instructive: **Then they shall know.** Furthermore the Exile would be a testimony or sign to **the Gentiles.** The defeat of God's people would not indicate the Lord's lack of strength, but the serious consequences of sin against Him. Yet He would demonstrate that His purpose had always been to restore His people to Himself (Heb. 12:1-11). Through the difficult experience, His people would learn that their God was both holy and loving. Sin offended Him, but He still would reach out to restore the sinner.

Ezekiel 12:16

But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Note the sword, famine, and pestilence, which will be discussed more in Chapter 14.

Part of the responsibility of the remnant is to proclaim the goodness of God among the nations. They have to repent before they can witness.

Constable: Yahweh would allow a few of them to escape so they could tell what had

happened, including their sinfulness and God's dealings with them as a nation.

The deportations were designed to show the deportees that the Lord was the faithful, loving, and powerful God over Israel they should return to. Lest the foreign nations misunderstand Judah's dispersion, God had the exiles testify that their abominations precipitated the deportations. In this way the nations would realize that the Lord was holy, righteous, and cared for his people, Israel. He was not one who allowed them to be conquered because he did not care. This latter notion was very common in the ancient Near East. Each nation was uniquely related to its patron deity. If a nation was defeated in battle or decimated by famine and disease, this meant its god was weak and incapable of protecting and caring for its people. To prevent such a misconception, the Lord would send a remnant of Jews among the nations to witness that they were in exile only because of their own iniquity, not because of the Lord's failure."

What men fail to appreciate in prosperity, they will occasionally learn through adversity.

The sign of the anxious eater 12:17-20

Ezekiel 12:17

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Dake: [Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying ...] The 15th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:17-20, fulfilled). Next, Ezekiel 12:21. This was another prophetic pantomime, one wherein Ezekiel was to eat his bread "with quaking," and drink his water "with trembling and with carefulness."

Three Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and the land of Israel shall eat bread with carefulness, and drink water with astonishment, that their land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein (Ezekiel 12:19).
2. All the cities that are inhabited will be laid waste, and the land made desolate (Ezekiel 12:20).
3. They will know that I am Jehovah.

BKC: 17-20. Ezekiel's second sign was briefer than the first, but it too was intended to convey a message about those living in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel (v. 19). Ezekiel was to tremble as he ate his food, and shudder ... as he drank his water (v. 18).

Ezekiel's actions represented the terror Israel would experience. As he had said earlier (4:16) the people in Jerusalem would eat and drink in anxiety and in despair. The enemy would plunder the land, devastating the towns and making the land ... desolate. Fear of the enemy would grip the people as they watched God's judgment decimate the land. Yet they brought the judgment on themselves by their violence (20:19; cf. 7:23; 8:17).

McGee: 17-19: This is quite a stunt Ezekiel is going to pull. He is to bring his table out into the street and sit there, trembling as he eats. Then the people will come and say, "What's the matter with you? Have you got a chill, or is it something you ate?" Ezekiel

will give them God's message: "I want you to know what's happening over yonder in Jerusalem. There's a famine over there. There's fear over there. God is destroying the city." What an awesome message he has to bring.

OTS Parable of the Suffering Citizens (12:17–20).

God directed Ezekiel to eat his bread with "trembling" and drink his water with "quivering and anxiety." In so doing he was illustrating what would happen to the citizens of Jerusalem. The "violence," i.e., social chaos, would bring on an invasion which would strip their land of its fullness. The cities would be laid waste and the land would be a desolation. When these unspeakable disasters befell their land, the inhabitants of Jerusalem would eat and drink in anxiety and horror. Yet through this bitter experience they would learn something about the true nature of Yahweh.

ESV 17–20 The demeanor of refugees is the focus of these verses. The symbolic action has some resonance with 4:9–17, but the emphasis here is psychological rather than ritual. The people of the land (12:19) refers to the commoners among Ezekiel's fellow exiles who are now, of course, landless.

Chuck Smith 17-18: In other words, just drink a little, measure your swallows. Drink it with carefulness and shake as you eat your bread, and drink your water like you're frightened.

Constable: The Lord also instructed Ezekiel to eat his bread and drink his water while trembling and visibly anxious. The prophet appears to have been eating still the symbolic rations that God had prescribed for him earlier (4:9-17).

Ezekiel 12:18

Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;

Missler: Presumably in context here, he is being told to do this conspicuously, make a public show. Ezekiel was called upon here, just as he was before, to do another play acting skit, another demonstration to get the message across. It was an object lesson.

Clarke: Eat thy bread with quaking—Assume the manner of a person who is every moment afraid of his life, who has nothing but a morsel of bread to eat, and a little water to drink. Thus signifying the siege, and the straits to which they should be reduced. See this explained,

To the **people of the land** (that is, his fellow exiles), Ezekiel was to demonstrate and declare God's warning about the devastating conditions that would befall the people in Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 12:19

And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

Chuck Smith: You know, these prophets must have been extremely colorful people. But, God is seeking to get the attention of the people. Now, they won't listen to God anymore, so God has these prophets do these colorful things to draw the attention of the people. "Now, what's Ezekiel doing now? Look at the way he's drinking his water and eating his bread, you know. What's he got up his sleeve this time?" And they become curious as they see these bazaar kind of actions. But, all planned of God in order to get the attention, so He can still speak. Now that, to me, is amazing. God still desires to give the message though they're not listening anymore. But He still wants them to receive the message. Long after a person has closed his heart to God, closed his ear to God, God continues to speak in different ways. If you won't listen directly then God will speak to you subtly through the things around your life, circumstances, events and all, but God will get His message across, one way or the other.

Sin, Violence—Acts which harm our neighbors, diminish the neighbor's rights or environment, or threaten our society can be classified as violence (Hebrew *chamas*). When violence becomes the accepted life-style of a community, the community must get ready for God's intervention. God accepts no excuses for violent behavior. It is sin.¹³

Chuck Smith 19-22: This is what they were going around saying, "Aha, you know, not in our time. The days are prolonged, every vision fails. You know, you've heard that for a long time. What do you mean the Lord is coming? What do you mean we're getting close to the end? The days are prolonged; we're going to be here for another thousand years. Life is going to go on, man is going to continue. What do you mean we're getting close to the end?" That's what they were saying in Jerusalem at this time. Destruction was right on them. It was days away, and yet the proverb was, "Aw, the days are prolonged, every vision fails. It's not going to happen in our lifetime." As Peter said, "In the last days scoffers will come saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? Since our fathers have fallen asleep, everything continues as they were from the beginning' (II Peter 3:3-4). But Peter said, "The day of the Lord will come."

Constable: He was then to explain to his audience that the Jews in Jerusalem would eat and drink like he had done. The Lord would strip their land of its abundance because the people had committed so much violence contrary to His law. He would also desolate the inhabited cities and the countryside of Judah. Then His people would know that He was the Lord. He loved them enough to discipline them (cf. Heb. 12:5-11).

¹³ Disciple's Study Bible

Ezekiel 12:20

And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

For the fulfillment of the prophecy that Jerusalem and Judah would be **laid waste**, see 2 Kin. 25:8–21; Jer. 39:8–10; 44:1–6; 52:1–30; Lam. 1:3, 4.

The present judgment as evidence of divine faithfulness 12:21-28

This section contains two prophecies (vv. 21-25 and 26-28). The first one deals with the objection of some of the exiles that the prophecies of Jerusalem's overthrow would never come to pass. The second addresses the view of some that destruction would come but not for a very long time.

Ezekiel 12:21

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Dake: [And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying ...] The 16th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:21-25, fulfilled). Next, Ezekiel 12:26.

Six Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. What is that proverb in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision fails? Tell them therefore, I will make this proverb to cease, and they will no more use it as a proverb in Israel (Ezekiel 12:22-23).
2. The days are at hand and the effect of the vision (Ezekiel 12:23).
3. No more will there be any vain vision of flattering divination within the house of Israel (Ezekiel 12:24).
4. I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass (Ezekiel 12:25).
5. It will be no more prolonged.
6. In your days will I say the word, and will perform it.

LAN: 21-28 These two short messages were warnings that God's words would come true—*soon!* Less than six years later, Jerusalem would be destroyed. Yet the people were skeptical. Unbelief and false security led them to believe it would never happen. The apostle Peter dealt with this problem in the church (2 Peter 3:9). It is dangerous to say Christ will never return or to regard his coming as so far in the future as to be irrelevant today. All that God says is sure to happen. Don't dare assume that you have plenty of time to get right with God.

BKC: *Five messages on the certainty of judgments (12:21-14:23)*

Following Ezekiel's two signs (12:1-20), he delivered a series of five messages (12:21-25; 12:26-28; 13; 14:1-11; 14:12-23) to destroy the people's false optimism and to show the certainty of judgment.

- (1) The first message on the certainty of judgment.

12:21-25. The first two messages were attacks on two popular proverbs the people were quoting. This message began with God asking Ezekiel about the proverb ... The days go by and every vision comes to nothing. A “proverb” (*māšāl*) was a terse expression of a commonly held or self-evident truth. The point of this proverb was the belief that Ezekiel’s (and other prophets’) predictions of doom would not take place. It had the effect of labeling those prophets doomsayers thus allowing the people to ignore their messages.

God said He would keep the people from quoting that proverb any longer. The people’s smug assurance would end when the judgments arrived. The past days had not invalidated the earlier predictions as the people supposed. Instead, they had decreased the time remaining till the prophecies would be accomplished. The days are near, God said.

False prophets had been contradicting the claims of God’s true messengers in both Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 28:1-4) and Babylon (cf. Jer. 29:1, 8-9). Their optimistic predictions would cease as God hastened to fulfill His word. He would remove false visions and flattering divinations. Ezekiel’s cries of doom were not distant rumblings of some still-future storm. The judgment was imminent: it shall be fulfilled without delay. God would fulfill whatever He predicted (cf. Ezek. 12:28).

OTS The First Saying (12:21–25).

The first saying was this: “The days are long and every vision fails.” The argument was that long years had elapsed and the prophetic threats of Jerusalem’s destruction had not materialized. As events unfolded, the mouths of false teachers would be stopped. This skeptical proverb would no longer be heard in the land. To replace it, Ezekiel suggested his own proverb: “The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision” (12:21–23).

“False vision” and “divination” would fail. God, however, would speak a certain revelation. Whatever word which God spoke would be performed. The destruction of Jerusalem would not be delayed. In the days of that very generation God would speak his word of judgment, and he would execute that judgment as well (12:24f.).

ESV: 21–25 The proverb that authorizes ignoring Ezekiel's warning, quoted in [v. 22](#), is inverted in [v. 23](#). It requires refutation, much as another proverb will in [18:2–3](#).

ESV 21–28 Exile Confirmed. Apparently, the delay in fulfillment of the prophecy opened a window for counter-prophecies, which are here rebutted. This pair of oracles may be a longer and shorter version of the same prophecy given on different occasions, somewhat like [7:1–9](#). These verses provide an affirmation of the predictive element among the Hebrew prophets: their “forth-telling” is sometimes emphasized, but “foretelling” constituted a significant factor in their preaching.

Constable 21-22: The Lord asked Ezekiel about a proverb that the Jews were reciting among themselves. They were saying that the days were long and that every vision failed. They meant that the captivity that the true prophets (including Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) had predicted was a long way off and that the visions they claimed to have would turn out to be unreliable.

Ezekiel 12:22

Son of man, what *is* that proverb *that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?*

[what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?] Question 10. Next, Ezekiel 13:7.

Dake: [**The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth**] This statement was made so often in Israel and was so firmly believed that it did become a proverb or common saying; yet it was the direct opposite to what Jeremiah and other prophets had spoken concerning the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. God assured them that they would no longer be able to use it in Israel, for judgment was soon to come and the prophets He had sent would be vindicated in this generation (Ezekiel 12:22-25).

Clarke: The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?—These are the words of the infidels and scoffers, who, because vengeance was not speedily executed on an evil work, set their heart to do iniquity. “These predictions either will not come in our days, or will wholly fail; why then should we disquiet ourselves about them?” Strange, that the very means used by the most gracious God to bring sinners to repentance, should be made by them the very instruments of their own destruction! See 2 Peter 3:4.

¹⁴The “proverb” is evidently one used by the exiles to ridicule Ezekiel because God’s warnings had not been immediately fulfilled. God issues warnings, not as predictions of the future, but as opportunities for men to know the will of God and to change their lives accordingly.

Nelson: The proverb or popular saying among the exiles indicates how hardened they were to Ezekiel’s prophecies. The days are prolonged, and every vision fails: Although already captive, the people were cynical and apathetic, mistakenly thinking that a delay in judgment meant no judgment, at least in their lifetime (vv. 25, 27, 28; see 2 Pet. 3:3, 4).

McGee 22-23: Ezekiel is saying, “God has been patient, but it’s all up now. The captivity is coming, and God is not going to wait any longer.”

Ezekiel 12:23

Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

Clarke: The days are at hand—Far from failing or being prolonged, time is posting on, and the destruction threatened is at the door.

¹⁴ Believers Study Bible

God offered a reply to this proverb, “The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision.” Judgment was imminent, and the fulfillment of every vision of judgment was near (v. 25).¹⁵

Constable 23-24: The Lord promised that the people would no longer say such things because He would prove them wrong. Ezekiel was to contradict this proverb and give the people another one that the days of the coming captivity were not far off and that the prophets' visions would come to pass. The Lord would frustrate the false prophecies and predictions of the future that only flattered the people.

Ezekiel 12:24

For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

Nelson 23-25: The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision: An antithetical proverb would replace the old one (v. 22), and false prophets opposing Ezekiel would cease to speak. in your days: The exiles would live to see the judgment on Jerusalem fulfilled.

ESV: The introduction of the theme of false prophecy sets the stage for the next block of oracles.

Not in the days of your grandchildren or great grandchildren or whatever, but in your days.

Ezekiel 12:25

For I *am* the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

God, Faithfulness—We may become impatient for God to fulfill His promises. We can be sure what God says, He will do. He is dependable, unchangeable.

Constable: Yahweh promised to bring to pass what He had spoken without delay. What He had said He would do in the days of Ezekiel's hearers. His word of judgment would go forth, and judgment would follow immediately.

¹⁵ Believers Study Bible

The imminent fulfillment of prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction 12:26-28

Ezekiel 12:26

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Dake: [Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying ...] The 17th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:26-28, fulfilled). Next, [□]Ezekiel 13:1. The vision concerned many days to come; and the prophecies were of the times far off (Ezekiel 12:27).

Two Predictions—Fulfilled:

1. There will none of My words be prolonged anymore (Ezekiel 12:28).
2. The word which I have spoken will be done.

Clarke: In your days—will I say the word, and will perform it—Even these mockers shall live to see and feel this desolation. This is more particularly intimated in the following verses.

BKC: (2) The second message on the certainty of God's judgment.

12:26-28. The first proverb attacked by Ezekiel expressed the people's doubts about the *fact* of God's judgment. The second proverb expressed their doubts about the *imminency* of God's judgment. This saying was not specifically called a proverb, but it was cast in the same mold as the first proverb. It was another popular saying in Israel.

Even those Israelites who believed Ezekiel was a true prophet of God doubted the soon fulfillment of his oracles: he prophesies about the distant future. If God does act, their reasoning went, it will not be soon. Interestingly the Apostle Peter predicted that the same attitude would prevail in the last days regarding the second coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-10). God's delay is a sign of mercy, not uncertainty.

Ezekiel said the judgment was not distant; it was standing at Israel's very doorstep. God said, None of My words will be delayed any longer (cf. Ezek. 12:25). The second proverb, like the first, was giving false hope to a nation that needed a clear understanding of its dire condition.

OTS The Second Saying (12:26–28).

Some were willing to grant that the predictions of destruction of Jerusalem might be a genuine word from the Lord. They, however, argued that such predictions were for the distant future: "He prophesies of times far off." God's response was that the divine word would not be delayed any longer. Any word which God spoke definitely would be performed.¹⁶

ESV: 26–28 Here, the tone is not so much the assumed failure of vision as its supposed interminable delay. But the God who gives the word will also bring it to pass, without fail.

¹⁶ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 12:26–28). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Constable 26-27: Some of the people were saying that the prophecies about coming judgment were true, but they would not come to pass for a long time.

Rebelliousness (v. 25) can take many forms, some of them even quite pious ('How do I know which preacher to believe, which church is right?'). In Ezekiel's day it was 'How do I know which prophet is correct (v. 24), which prophecy applies to me (v. 27)?'

Ezekiel 12:27

Son of man, behold, *they* of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days *to come*, and he prophesieth of the times *that are far off*.

The people still thought that judgment would be delayed; Ezekiel was told to assure them a second time that the judgment would not be postponed any more.

Ezekiel 12:28

Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

Missler: See Ecc 8:11; Mt 24:48-50. These are all mechanisms by which one tries at least intellectually or some way to get out from under the scope of some prophecy. It is clear that Jesus Christ wanted us to be in a position of moment by moment expectation. We tend to stay closer to him if we know that he might drop in on us at any moment.

2 Peter 3:3-6

3] Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4] And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Missler: They were scoffing at prophecy. There are different ways to deny a truth. One is to say that God didn't say that. Another is to claim that was not what God meant, that He really didn't mean it literally, He meant it spiritually, or some fuzzy other way that defies the way of any tangible reality. It is called liberalism. So first of all, there is an expression of skepticism about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

5] For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6] Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

Missler: One thing that is not obvious at first, is the link between prophecy and creation. The important thread is the concept that God intervenes in man's history. That man's history did not just happen by the random events of the cosmos.

God created man. The concept of God creating man is consistent and part of the concept that God will also intervene in man's history. God cares, He is involved. You are not an accident.

Why do people adhere to ideas like evolution? To acknowledge the creation of the universe would be to acknowledge the Creator. To acknowledge a Creator implies responsibility.

The concept of denying the Creator is a close cousin, as Peter pointed out, to the denying of a judgment coming. If judgment can be made to seem remote, intellectually far away, we can sort of get comfortable about it.

But when you have a prophet like Ezekiel running around saying that God is going to bring judgment, it is not surprising that they do not want to hear about it, because that would imply accountability. The need for repentance implies that you must make a decision, and that your outcome is a function of your response to that Creator. Ezekiel preached this for 7 years before Jerusalem fell - Ezek 1:2, 33:21.

For those who want to dig more into the false vs true prophet issue, study the contrast between Jeremiah and Hananiah in Jer 28. Deut 18:10; 1 Sam 6:2; and Ezek 21:21.

Clarke: **There shall none of my words be prolonged any more**—He had waited to be gracious; they abused his mercy; and at last the protracted wrath rushed upon them with irresistible force.

McGee: Everybody wants to believe that the future out yonder is beautiful. My friend, the only beautiful thing that lies ahead is the fact that someday the Lord Jesus will take His church out of the world—that is the *only* hope we have. This world is not going to get better, and we are not going to have peace. In all of recorded history there have only been two to three hundred years of what could actually be called peace—man is not building the new world he thinks he is.

Constable: Nevertheless the Lord promised not to delay His promises of coming judgment any longer. He would perform all that He had promised (cf. 2 Pet. 3:2-13).