



# Book of Ezekiel

## Chapter 24

*Theme: Parable of the Boiling Pot  
and the Death of Ezekiel's Wife*

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**Theme:** The Parable of the Boiling Pot and the Death of Ezekiel's Wife

In Chapter 24, we have the Parable of the Boiling Pot, or the caldron (like a cooking kettle). The first 5 verses describe it, and then the next 9 verses or so, explain the parable.

**Constable:** Until now Ezekiel had predicted that judgment would fall on Jerusalem and Judah in the future. The day of that judgment finally arrived, and he proceeded to announce it with a parable and two acted signs or "action sermons." With these verses we come to the climax of all that Ezekiel has been trying to say in the previous twelve chapters.<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 24 we have the parable of the boiling pot and the death of Ezekiel's wife. God will use both of these to speak to the people.

On the day that Jerusalem came under siege, Ezekiel was busy about his ministry in Babylon. He related to the captives another verbal parable. He also performed another symbolic act on that day (24:1f.).<sup>2</sup>

### **1. The parable of the cooking pot 24:1-14**

This parable represented the siege of Jerusalem, which began on the day that Ezekiel told this story.

### **Ezekiel 24:1**

**Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

"Ninth year" - Jer 52:4; Tebet was December/January.

**Constable 1-3:** The Lord instructed Ezekiel to note permanently the day this revelation came to him because it was the very day that Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem. This day fell in January (cf. 2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 39:1; 52:4). Block dated it as January 5, 587 B.C., but most scholars follow Parker and Duberstein and date it as January 15, 586 B.C. Ezekiel's ability to announce the beginning of the siege from Babylon validated his ministry as a prophet. The Jews later memorialized this special day with an annual fast (Zech. 8:19). The prophet was also to deliver a parable to the Jewish exiles the same day. They were part of the "rebellious house" of Israel, one of God's favorite titles for His people Israel in this book.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, 2010 Edition, <http://www.soniclight.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 24:1-27). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

**Dake:** [in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month] This was the very day Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem to destroy it completely (Ezekiel 24:1-2). The siege began on this day and was finished in the 11th year, the 4th month, and the 9th day of the month (2 Kings 25:2-4).<sup>3</sup>

**LAN 1-14:** Ezekiel gave this illustration in 588 B.C., three years after the first of the previous messages (see Ezekiel 20:1-2). The people in Judah thought they were the choice meat because they hadn't been taken into captivity in 597 when the Babylonians last invaded the land. Ezekiel used this illustration before (Ezekiel 11) to show that though the people thought they were safe and secure inside the cooking pot, this pot would actually be the place of their destruction. This message was given to the exiles in Babylonia the very day that the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem (Ezekiel 24:2), beginning a siege that lasted over two years and resulted in the city's destruction. When God's punishment comes, it is relentless.<sup>4</sup>

**Wycliffe Allegory of the Rusted Pot Set on the Fire. 24:1-14.**

On the day when the siege and capture of Jerusalem began, the Lord gave the prophet an allegory and an acted parable to deliver concerning the siege and ultimate capture of the city. He was to set a rusted caldron (Jerusalem) on the fire, fill it with water, and throw pieces of flesh (the inhabitants of Jerusalem) into it. He was to pile fuel under it to make it boil furiously (the siege and its severities). Then he should pull out pieces of flesh indiscriminately from the kettle (the universal dispersion when the siege was over). He next was to set the empty pot on coals so that its rust and filth might be molten and consumed (the purifying judgments were to continue long after the destruction of the city).<sup>5</sup>

**Ninth year ... tenth month ... tenth day of the month.** The day of the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem (II Kgs 25:1; Jer 30:1; 52:4). January 587 (or 588) B.C. During the Exile and till 518 B.C., this day was observed as a fast (Zech 8:19). 3. **Utter a parable.** A *māshāl* (cf. 17:2). Verses 3-5 are in poetical form. The prophet's inspiration came often during ordinary pursuits, here apparently while in the course of preparing a meal.<sup>6</sup>

**BKC 1-2:** Ezekiel's final prophecies of doom against Jerusalem came in the ninth year (of King Jehoiachin's exile; cf. 1:2), in the 10th month on the 10th day. This was January 15, 588 B.C.—a day of national calamity for Jerusalem. The king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem that very day. This was the day Ezekiel had been pointing to for over four years. The date was so significant that it was also mentioned by the writer of 1 and 2 Kings (cf. 2 Kings 25:1) and by the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 39:1; 52:4).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>4</sup> Life Application Notes, Life Application Bible

<sup>5</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 24:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>6</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 24:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>7</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:1-2). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**McGee:** This is the first time that Ezekiel has dated his message. At this very moment Nebuchadnezzar was breaking through the wall of Jerusalem. There was no television in that day to let Ezekiel know what was happening. There was no satellite to convey this message from Jerusalem to Babylon. The only way he could get this message was by God revealing it to him. The liberal theologians have always had a problem with this verse; one of them has said: “This verse forces on us in the clearest fashion the dilemma either Ezekiel was a deliberate deceiver, or he was possessed of some kind of second sight.” He certainly was possessed of second sight—God’s sight, by the way. The liberal doesn’t recognize it as that, of course.<sup>8</sup>

### **1–14 A Parable of the Cooking Pot**

On the very day when the Babylonians began their siege of Jerusalem (January 15, 588 B.C.), the Lord gave Ezekiel a parable illustrating the city’s downfall. Jerusalem was like a cooking pot, which had been encrusted with deposits (its bloodshed and idolatry, 24:6–8, 13). The inhabitants of Jerusalem were like meat and bones cooking inside the pot. The fire burning beneath the pot (the Babylonian siege) would thoroughly cook the meat and char the bones, both of which would eventually be removed piece by piece (a picture of the exile). The empty pot would then be left on the fire until its impurities were burned away.<sup>9</sup>

“The ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day” is January 15, 588 B.C. This date became a fast day commemorating the fall of Jerusalem (Zech 8:19).

**ESV 1–5:** The oracle is precisely dated in v. 1. The notation here in Hebrew does not follow the pattern found for the dates in the rest of the book but corresponds exactly to that of 2 Kings 25:1 (see also Jer. 39:1; 52:4). It seems that here the date accords with the years of a king’s reign rather than years of exile (Ezekiel’s norm). It is thus equivalent to January 587 b.c. (or 588 if reckoned by years of exile). The content of the “parable” speaks for itself (in addition to Ezek. 11:2–3, cf. Mic. 3:3): anticipation builds as the fine stew cooks.

**ESV 1–27:** Two Losses. Although not explicitly linked, the two losses recounted here almost certainly belong together, and they come at a turning point in Ezekiel’s prophetic career. The first loss (vv. 1–14) is that of the city of Jerusalem—with a Babylonian siege launched, it is the beginning of the end. The second loss, that of Ezekiel’s own wife (vv. 15–24), triggers his most poignant symbolic action. Finally (vv. 25–27), the promise of the end is made, linking this chapter back to the prologue and forward to what lies beyond the destruction of Jerusalem.

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<sup>8</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 24:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> Dockery, D. S., Butler, T. C., Church, C. L., Scott, L. L., Ellis Smith, M. A., White, J. E., & Holman Bible Publishers (Nashville, T. (1992). *Holman Bible Handbook* (441). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

**ESV 1–14:** Jerusalem, the Bloody Pot. This is the last of Ezekiel's "parables" (see 12:22). It uses imagery already found in the temple vision (see 11:2–3) but further developed and with greater clarity here. As the Babylonians lay siege to Jerusalem, it is likened to a boiling pot. A brief "song" in 24:3b–5 receives two explanations in vv. 6–14.

## **Ezekiel 24:2**

**Son of man, write thee the name of the day, *even* of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day.**

**Missler:** Even though Ezekiel was continually harping and prophesying against Jerusalem, he was hundreds of miles away; but he can document this event. Obviously, there were messengers; but he knew supernaturally through the Lord. He knew that the third and final siege of Nebuchadnezzar was beginning against Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 39:1, and 52:4 deal with this).<sup>10</sup>

**ESV: The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.** Jerusalem was 880 miles (1,416 km) away, a journey of several weeks. God revealed it to Ezekiel at the same time it happened.

**Chuck Smith:** This is the day that the siege against Jerusalem started. Now he's over in Babylon and in front of the people he writes down this date. You go back to Second Kings, chapter 25, verse 1, "And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, and in the tenth day of the month that Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came, he and all of his host against Jerusalem and pitched against it. And they built the forts round about." How did Ezekiel know that? Without telegraph, or telephones, or any means of communicating that truth over that distance. Woke up this morning, wrote this date down. Said to the people, "This is the day the siege is started." Only by the knowledge of God could he have known these things. Only because God had revealed it to him. He's really putting himself out on a limb. "This is the day. The siege has started today." You know, it would take two weeks or so by fast express to get word back and forth in those days from Babylon to Israel. Another proof of the authorship, God, author of the book.<sup>11</sup>

Ezekiel was in captivity in Babylon, with no earthly way possible to know what was happening in Jerusalem, which was over 500 miles away. But God told him, "Today is the day. Nebuchadnezzar's army had put Jerusalem to siege."

What day was it? Ezekiel says it is the ninth year, tenth month, tenth day. It is the ninth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, which Jeremiah wrote as well:

**Jer. 52:4** Now it came about in the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, camped against it and built a siege wall all around it.

That date of that year would come out on our calendars to January 1, 588BC.

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<sup>10</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>11</sup> Chuck Smith, Pastor, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA Sermon Notes.

### **Ezekiel 24:3**

**And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it:**

**Constable 3-5:** In this parable, the people were to put a bronze (v. 11) cooking pot (caldron, Heb. *sir*) on the fire and pour water into it. This large pot had two handles, a round base, and a large mouth. Then the people were to put various pieces of choice meat into the pot and were to build a strong fire under it so the water would boil and the meaty bones would cook. We might call verses 3b-13 "the cooking pot song" since it is a poem similar to "the sword song" (21:8-17) and "the cup song" (23:32-34).

There is no indication that this was another of Ezekiel's acted parables. Rather it seems to have been a message that the prophet spoke without dramatizing it by really boiling meat in a caldron.

**Dake: [a parable unto the rebellious house]** The parable is given in Ezekiel 24:3-5, the application in Ezekiel 24:6-14. Jerusalem here is compared to a great caldron, the fire around the pot and under it representing the great army of Babylon besieging the city, and the bones in the pot symbolizing the inhabitants of the city shut up within the walls. The choice pieces in the pot refer to the choice members of the community.

**BKC 3-5:** Ezekiel told the rebellious house of Israel (cf. 3:9) a parable about a cooking pot being filled with water and choice cuts of meat being boiled. This was similar to his message in chapter 11, in which some leaders used the figure of a cooking pot to give Jerusalem false hope. The people thought that being in the pot (Jerusalem) would keep them safe; but here Ezekiel prophesied that the pot would be their place of destruction.<sup>12</sup>

#### **OTS: A Parabolic Message (24:3–14).**

The parable began with a command to "put on the pot and also pour water into it." Then Ezekiel urged his auditors to put choice pieces of meat into the pot, build a fire under it, and make it "boil vigorously." By way of explanation of his parable, Ezekiel pronounced two "woes" against those who trusted in the strength of Jerusalem (24:3–5).

1. *The first woe (24:6–8).* The rust-covered pot represented Jerusalem the "bloody city." She had been stained with the blood of the innocent, especially children offered to Baal. The filth of the city had not yet been removed by centuries of preaching and chastisement. Now Jerusalem had reached the ultimate extreme. Piece by piece the chunks of meat would be brought out of the pot, i.e., the citizens would be carried away into captivity. This deportation would be indiscriminate (24:6).

Jerusalem's fate was well deserved. She had become so calloused that she made no effort to hide her crimes of bloodshed. As if to flaunt her transgression, she "placed it on the bare rock," i.e., she performed her acts of bloodshed openly. Through the messages of his prophets, God would preserve those bloodstains in plain view until his wrath fell on the place (24:7f.).

2. *The second woe (24:9–14).* In the second woe God assures his people that he would heap up the fuel for the burning of Jerusalem. He would see to it that both the meat

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<sup>12</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:3–5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

(citizens) and the bones (leaders) within the pot were burned. Then he would set the pot on the coals so the filth could be melted out. The Lord was weary with previous half-hearted efforts at reform. The uncleanness of the place could only be removed by the drastic process of melting down the pot, i.e., totally destroying Jerusalem (24:9–12).

At this point the Lord would make no further effort to purge the nation by prophetic admonition. All that remained was for the wrath of God to be poured out on Jerusalem. This threat was irrevocable because the Lord had spoken, and he would not change his mind. He would have no pity upon them. He would hand Jerusalem over to the Chaldeans for the judgment appropriate to her sins (24:13f.).<sup>13</sup>

### **Ezekiel 24:4**

**Gather the pieces thereof into it, *even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones.***

**Chuck Smith:** And now here is another sign. He sets on this big ol' pot and he sets all of this flesh and bones and burns the bones underneath and gets this thing boiling. Everybody comes around saying, "What in the world? You're going to burn that. What are you doing boiling all that stuff away?" And he said, "This is what's happening to the inhabitants in Jerusalem. They're about to be devoured." Now, earlier in the sixteenth chapter they were saying, you know, "We are the caldron, or we are in the caldron and the fire is not going to touch us." But boy, he keeps this fire going until the thing boils and they are devoured, they are consumed. And thus, he speaks to them of the judgment that is coming.

### **Ezekiel 24:5**

**Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, *and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein.***

Bones were used for fuel. That is the Parable of the caldron. The concept of a pot was used for Jerusalem in several other places (Ezek 11:3; Isa 1:25-26; Jer 6:29-30). But verses 6 - 14 are going to explain what this parable of the pot is about. It is a heavy one, and as we saw before, we here read of the "bloody city" again.<sup>14</sup>

**Wycliffe Pile the logs** (RSV). Read with verse 10, in place of MT *pile the bones*. Boil its pieces (RSV). So two Hebrew manuscripts in place of MT *boil its boilings*. Seethe the bones. Along with the flesh on them (cf. v. 4). 6. Pot whose rust or filth is in it (RSV). Cf. 22:2. Let no lot fall upon it. In 597, were the inhabitants of the city taken captive by lot? It will not be so now. The dispersion will be indiscriminate. 7, 8. Blood ... upon the top of a rock. The openness of Jerusalem's sin (cf. Isa 3:9) is to be paralleled by the openness of her punishment. Blood uncovered cries out for vengeance (Gen 4:10; Lev 17:13; Deut

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<sup>13</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 24:3–14). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

<sup>14</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

12:16; Job 16:18). In verse 8 the Lord is spoken of as appointing this shedding, so as to bring judgment on Jerusalem because of it.<sup>15</sup>

### **Ezekiel 24:6**

**Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.**

There is some evidence to indicate that perhaps in the earlier sieges, those who went into captivity were chosen by lot. This was the third seige and they all got in the pot. This time there were no lots being cast (2 Sam 8:2; Joel 3:3; Ob 11; and Nahum 3:10).

**Constable:** Ezekiel was then to announce woe on the bloody city (no longer the holy city) of Jerusalem (cf. Nah. 3:1), which the pot represented (cf. 11:3, 7, 11; Jer. 1:13-14). The pot had rust (Heb. *hel'ah*) in it that evidently stood for the blood of the people slain there (cf. 22:1-16). Another view is that the pot was bronze (which does not rust), and the red in it was the blood of the meat.<sup>358</sup> Ezekiel was then to draw several pieces of meat out of the pot at random, perhaps signifying God rescuing a remnant from judgment.

**Dake: [bring it out piece by piece]** Bring forth the inhabitants one by one.

**Dake: [let no lot fall upon it]** This signifies that the city was to be destroyed, not divided by lot between conquerors. In the previous sieges under Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, some were taken and others left; now all the people were to be removed.

**LAN 6-13:** The city of Jerusalem was like a pot so encrusted with sin that it would not come clean. God wanted to cleanse the lives of those who lived in Jerusalem, and he wants to cleanse our lives today. Sometimes he tries to purify us through difficulties and troublesome circumstances. When you face tough times, allow the sin to be burned from your life. Look at your problems as an opportunity for your faith to grow. When these times come, unnecessary priorities and diversions are purged away. We can reexamine our lives so that we will do what really counts.

**BKC 6-8:** Ezekiel explained the parable through two similar statements (vv. 6-8, 9-14), each beginning with the words, This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the city of bloodshed (vv. 6, 9). These statements spoke of the city's blood-guiltiness (cf. 22:1-16).

Ezekiel said Jerusalem was like a pot now encrusted, whose deposit will not go away! "Encrusted" and "deposit" are from the Hebrew word *hel'âh* and could be translated "rusted" and "rust." In the fire of God's judgment Jerusalem's "impurities" floated to the surface. Her corruption could not be hidden. She was as unappealing as rusty scum floating on the surface of a meal being cooked.

The meal was ruined by the rusty scum, so the contents of the pot were dumped. People in Jerusalem who had felt secure from Babylon's onslaught would be dragged

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<sup>15</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 24:5). Chicago: Moody Press.

from the city into exile with no regard for their position in society (no lots would be cast for them).

The cause for the dispersion was repeated (24:7-8): bloodshed poured out openly on rocks, not ... where the dust would cover it. Jerusalem had shed innocent blood and had not even bothered to hide her crimes. That blood was crying out, figuratively speaking, for vengeance (cf. Gen. 4:10; Lev. 17:13-14; Job 16:18). Because Jerusalem had openly shed the blood of others, God would openly shed her blood on the bare rock.<sup>16</sup>

**McGee:** Again, Jerusalem is called “the bloody city.” There is a pot, and there is scum in the pot. The pot is the city of Jerusalem; the citizens are in that pot. Their sin is the scum that’s in the pot.

Sometimes we hear somebody say concerning another group of people, “They are the scum of the earth.” Do you want to know what God says? He says your sin and my sin is the scum of the earth. Listen carefully: We are *all* in the same pot. The pot of Jerusalem is the pot of the world for you and me today. I get a little weary of all this talk about different “ethnic groups.” We’re all in the same pot, and we are the scum of the earth—that is, our sin is the scum of the earth. I don’t know how you could say it more strongly than that.<sup>17</sup>

**ESV 6–9** Some difficult Hebrew obscures the first phase of explanation. The picture seems to be that of a corroded pot which has spoiled the broth. The reference to blood (vv. 7–9) is unexpected and takes the imagery in a different direction, reminiscent of 22:2–4.

### **Ezekiel 24:7**

**For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust;**

**Constable:** Blood was in Jerusalem's midst like the blood of a sacrifice that had not been drained out on the ground and covered up (atoned for) as the Law prescribed (Lev. 17:13). Israel's sins were open for all to see, like blood on a bare rock (cf. Isa. 3:9). Not only was Jerusalem a city that had shed much innocent blood, but it was an unacceptable sacrifice to God because of the blood that was in it.

The blood of Jerusalem was to be left in the open, not covered by dust (Ezekiel 24:7-8).

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<sup>16</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:6–8). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>17</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 24:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **Ezekiel 24:8**

**That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered.**

In Leviticus 17:13 blood was to be covered by dust. Any blood not covered by dust was supposed to be avenged. It was a Levitical practice that underlies this; and we see this purging here.

The Book of Leviticus was the basic reference book for the priesthood. Clearly, Ezekiel being in the office of a prophet and since he had been trained as a priest, he would have been intimately familiar with all of this.

See Leviticus 14:34-37, 44-45; which goes into a whole procedure in which they cleanse the house of leprosy. They take the house to pieces, scrape it, and after it is plastered, the priest comes again to look (v. 44-45). This was the purging idea, leprosy being a type of sin. And, again, this was a cleansing. We have much the same intent or flavor here in terms of purging, cleansing Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup>

**Constable:** Therefore Yahweh was draining the blood out of Jerusalem by allowing the Babylonians to slay the Jews in it. The innocent blood that the Jerusalemites had shed had cried out to God for Him to take vengeance and to execute wrath on the murderers, as Abel's blood had done (Gen. 4:10; cf. Isa. 26:21). As the people of Jerusalem had shed blood openly, so the Lord would shed their blood openly, on the bare rock of Jerusalem.

The severe judgment sent by God upon Judah should be ample warning to those today who share the same callous disregard for the value of human life, both the born and the unborn.

### **Ezekiel 24:9**

**Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great.**

**Constable 9-10:** The Lord pronounced woe on the bloody city of Jerusalem and promised to make the pile of bones of the slain inhabitants great (cf. Isa. 30:33). Therefore Ezekiel was to kindle a strong fire, to boil the meat well, to mix in the spices normally used when meat was cooked this way, and to let the bones burn. All this symbolized the fierceness of the attack on Jerusalem and the many people that would die there.

**Dake:** [I will even make the pile for fire great] The destruction of the city was to be great like a great fire burning under a pot until nothing was left but the bones and dry burned flesh, with even the pot burned and melted (Ezekiel 24:9-11).

**BKC 9-14:** Ezekiel's second statement of judgment dealt specifically with the rusty pot. The meat in the pot was to be cooked "well done," picturing the slaughter of the Jerusalemites by Babylon. But God's judgment would go beyond the inhabitants to

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<sup>18</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, khouse.org

encompass the city of Jerusalem itself. The empty pot (Jerusalem without its inhabitants) was to be set ... on the coals ... its impurities were melted and its deposit, or rust, burned away. The city itself had to be destroyed to remove its impurities.

God had tried to cleanse His people from their impurities but they resisted all such efforts. Therefore they would experience the purifying work of God's wrath. God's patience had run out; the time had come for Him to judge. He would not hold back or have pity. God's mercy prompts Him to withhold judgment as long as possible to enable people to repent (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-10), but He does not wait indefinitely. A time comes when God punishes wickedness.<sup>19</sup>

### **Ezekiel 24:10**

**Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned.**

**Wycliffe Heap on wood.** This is paralleled by verse 5. Empty out the broth (RSV). So the LXX, by slight change, instead of MT, *spice the spicings*. Let the bones be burned. By the powerful action of the heat in boiling. 12. In vain I have wearied myself (RSV). A slight emendation gives this reading, in place of MT *with toil she hath wearied* (me, or herself). Its thick rust (RSV) or *great filth* must be consumed out of the pot. 13. Till I have satisfied or appeased my wrath (RSV). See also 5:13; 8:18; 16:42. 14. I will judge you (RSV). So two Hebrew manuscripts and various versions. Cf. 23:49.<sup>20</sup>

**ESV 10–14** The compounded nature of corruption and rot demands that both the pot and its contents be completely consumed (v. 11; see 22:15). The cleansing **fire** burns with such intensity that nothing will remain. The first-person forms of 24:14 are repetitive and insistent: this is God's work, and it is certain to come.

### **Ezekiel 24:11**

**Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed.**

**Constable:** Then Ezekiel was to keep the empty caldron on the coals with the fire burning hotly under it so it would glow and all the impurities in it would burn up. This represented the continuing purification of Jerusalem after all the Jews had left it. It would remain empty, and that condition would free it from all sinful pollution for many years to come.

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<sup>19</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:9–14). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>20</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 24:10). Chicago: Moody Press.

### **Ezekiel 24:12**

**She hath wearied *herself* with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum *shall be* in the fire.**

**Constable:** Jerusalem had wearied Yahweh as He toiled to scour its sin away in the past. The city would remain under judgment because its rust-like sin needed purging away (cf. 36:22-32).

### **Ezekiel 24:13**

**In thy filthiness *is* lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.**

**Constable:** Adultery in its many forms was part of Jerusalem's filthiness. It clung to the city even though the Lord had sent many prophets to clean it up and had already deported many of the people (in 605 and 597 B.C.). Now it was time for a thorough purging of the pot by the fire of God's wrath since cleansing with water had not been effective. Water and fire are two of God's favorite instruments of judgment, according to Scripture (cf. 2 Pet. 3:5-7).

**Dake:** [till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee] The filthiness of Jerusalem will not be purged until God has completed His fury upon it, which suggests how He will bring Israel to repentance and complete surrender in the last days. The future tribulation will purge Israel of all rebels and bring the nation to repentance (Zech. 12:10-13:1,8-9; Romans 11:25-29). Here, in the Babylonian captivity days, God was to complete His punishment of them before He would restore them again to their own land (Ezekiel 24:13-14). They were to reap what they had sown (Ezekiel 24:14), and so will it always be with all men (Galatians 6:7-8).

### **Ezekiel 24:14**

**I the LORD have spoken *it*: it shall come to pass, and I will do *it*; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD.**

Here he was talking specifically about Jerusalem, the melting pot, the boiling caldron.

**Constable:** In conclusion, the Lord promised that this judgment would come as He had predicted. He would not change His mind or mitigate the punishment. He would thoroughly judge the people because of their conduct and actions. They would be the meat and He would provide the heat. This is the most emphatic affirmation of divine resolve in the book.

God's mercy prompts Him to withhold judgment as long as possible to enable people to repent (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-10), but He does not wait indefinitely. A time comes when God punishes wickedness.

**Chuck Smith:** I mean, that's pretty sure when God says, "Hey, I have spoken it. It shall come to pass. I will do it. I will not go back, neither will I change." I mean, when God gets that emphatic, you can be sure that it indeed will happen and indeed it did.

## **Ezekiel 24:15**

**Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

### **2. Signs to the exiles 24:15-27**

The preceding parable pictured the siege of Jerusalem itself. The symbolic acts that Ezekiel performed next, perhaps on the same day, represented how the exiles were to respond to the news of Jerusalem's siege.

**Constable 15-16:** The Lord told Ezekiel that He was about to take the life of his beloved wife. The English word "blow" (v. 16) implies a sudden, unexpected death. The Hebrew word, *magephoh*, does not demand a sudden death, but it sometimes describes such a death (cf. 1 Sam. 4:17; 2 Sam. 17:9; 18:7). It could also mean death by plague or disease or anything that strikes a person down (cf. Exod. 9:14; Num. 14:37; 16:44-50; 25:8-9). In any case, the prophet was not to mourn, weep, or shed any tears over this personal tragedy (cf. Jer. 16:5-13).

Such an announcement raises the question of whether God commits unprovoked acts of cruelty just to illustrate a point. In view of revelations of God's character here and elsewhere, we should probably interpret this statement as meaning that God allowed Ezekiel's wife to die at this precise time. He used her death, which He predicted to the prophet, to communicate a message to His people (cf. the unfaithfulness of Hosea's wife). The text does not say that God put her to death as an object lesson. She could have been ill for some time before she died. Another similar situation involved God allowing the death of His innocent Son to occur at precisely the time God intended as another expression of His love and judgment.

**LAN 15-18:** God told Ezekiel that his wife would die and that he should not grieve for her. Ezekiel obeyed God fully, even as Hosea did when he was told to marry an unfaithful woman (Hosea 1:2-3). In both cases, these unusual events were intended as symbolic acts to picture God's relationship with his people. Obeying God can carry a high cost. The only grief more excruciating than losing your spouse and not being allowed to grieve would be to lose eternal life because you did not obey God. Ezekiel always obeyed God wholeheartedly. We should be wholehearted in our obedience. We can begin by doing all that God commands us to do, even when we don't feel like it. Are you willing to serve God as completely as Ezekiel did?

**McGee:** Apparently, the prophet had married a lovely, young Israelite girl, and they loved each other. But down there in captivity, she became sick and died. I imagine it was a heartbreak to Ezekiel, but again he must act a part:<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 24:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **OTS: A Parabolic Action (24:15–24).**

On that fateful day when Jerusalem came under siege by Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel experienced a personal loss. In the morning the Lord announced to him that his beloved wife—“the desire of your eyes”—would be suddenly taken from him. The prophet was to use this occasion of personal grief to teach the captives yet another truth. When he heard of his wife’s death he was not to manifest any of the traditional signs of mourning. He was not to publicly lament, weep or shed tears. He was not to alter his normal dress, nor allow his hair to hang down over the face to cover his mustache. He was not to eat the bread which was traditionally offered by friends to one who mourned. He was to “groan silently” (24:15–17).

Even though he knew that his wife would die at any moment, Ezekiel spoke to the captives in the morning, presumably delivering the parable of the pot mentioned earlier in the chapter. At evening his wife died. In the morning the prophet carried out the difficult commands which the Lord had given him. By this time the captives were familiar enough with Ezekiel’s methodology to realize that the absence of emotion at the death of his beloved wife must have some prophetic meaning. They therefore asked the prophet to explain his conduct (24:18f.).

Ezekiel’s conduct following the death of his wife illustrated the reaction of the Jews to the terrible news which they would shortly receive. God was about to profane his sanctuary by giving it into the hands of wicked men. Westerners have a difficult time appreciating the deep attachment which the Jews felt toward that Temple. Ezekiel described the Temple in three ways: (1) “the pride of your power,” i.e., that which guaranteed the security of Jerusalem; (2) “the desire of your eyes,” i.e., that which was most precious to them; and (3) “the delight of your soul,” i.e., that which they most missed by being in Babylon. Another blow would also fall. Their sons and daughters who still lived in Judah would fall by the sword (24:20f.).

The news from Jerusalem would be utterly shocking. When the captives heard that news, they would behave as Ezekiel had behaved at the death of his wife. They would experience a grief which is beyond tears, a despondency which could not be expressed with outward acts. To make matters worse, they would “rot away” in their iniquities, i.e., be totally consumed by a guilty conscience. The only outward expression which would be heard among them would be a quiet moan (24:22f.).

In his actions after the death of his wife Ezekiel was a “sign” to the captives. When the news arrived from Jerusalem they would know that the event had been decreed by the Lord. As terrible as the shock would be, the destruction of Jerusalem would help the captives gain a true perspective on the character of God (24:24).<sup>22</sup>

### **15–27 The Death of Ezekiel’s Wife**

The Lord announced to Ezekiel that his beloved wife was about to die suddenly. However, as an object lesson to Israel, the Lord commanded the prophet not to mourn outwardly over her death, as was the custom. Instead he could only groan to himself. When his wife died shortly thereafter, Ezekiel obeyed the Lord’s instructions. When the people observed his silence, they inquired about its significance. He explained that they

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<sup>22</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 24:15–24). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

were not to mourn publicly over the downfall of their beloved city and its temple, just as he refused to lament over his wife's death.

When Jerusalem finally fell, a fugitive would bring Ezekiel the news. At that time the Lord would remove Ezekiel's muteness (compare 3:26–27; 33:21–22). He would now speak openly and freely with the survivors of the catastrophe, warning and encouraging them.<sup>23</sup>

**ESV 15–18:** A bare glimpse is given of Ezekiel's inner life; there is little else like it in prophetic literature. One may wonder about the nature of marriages in ancient Judah, but Ezekiel's wife was the delight of his **eyes**. The list of mourning rites forbidden to him is easily understood, except for the reference to bread of men (v. 17), which must refer to bread provided to the bereaved (see Hos. 9:4). One can only imagine what this embodied oracle cost Ezekiel.

**ESV 15–24:** No Mourning for Ezekiel's Wife. No further reference is made to a date, but the placement of this account next to the oracle marking the siege of Jerusalem is significant. Ezekiel has performed other symbolic actions (4:1–5:17; 12:1–28; 21:19–20), but this must be the most painful. It elicits no protest (cf. 4:14; 20:49). Ezekiel has learned that there is nothing that God cannot ask of him. He is now about 35 years old, and he is told that his wife will die, and that he will not mourn. She dies; he complies. People are disturbed (24:19), but Ezekiel's action prefigures what awaits his countrymen in exile with him.

### **Ezekiel 24:16**

**Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.**

Now the text takes us into another sign that was even stranger. Ezekiel's wife died, and God instructed him NOT to mourn her. This had to be one of the strangest instructions that this Prophet of God had to endure.

**Dake: [the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down]** The desire of his eyes was his wife (Ezekiel 24:16,18). She died of a stroke, and he was commanded not to weep or show any other sign of mourning, so as to teach Israel the lesson that in the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the nation they would be too stunned to mourn (Ezekiel 24:16-17,21-23). His wife was a symbol of the temple, the desire of the eyes of Israel (Ezekiel 24:21).

### **Wycliffe The Prophet's Unnatural Abstention from Mourning. 24:15-24.**

The Lord told Ezekiel that his beloved wife would die suddenly, and that he was not to engage in the customary mourning practices. He was thus to be a symbol of the despair of the people at the fate of their beloved city Jerusalem.

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<sup>23</sup> Dockery, D. S., Butler, T. C., Church, C. L., Scott, L. L., Ellis Smith, M. A., White, J. E., & Holman Bible Publishers (Nashville, T. (1992). *Holman Bible Handbook* (441–442). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

The desire of thine eyes. Cf. verses 21, 25. “The phrase alone reveals there was a fountain of tears sealed up within the breast of this stern preacher” (J. Skinner, ExpB). With a stroke. This expression refers to a sudden and fatal disease (Num 14:37), usually a plague (Ex 9:14; II Chr 21:14). 17. The prophet was to check his natural instincts when the blow fell. For mourning customs, consult Ecclesiasticus 38:17; Isa 20:2; Mic 3:7; Lev 13:45. Nor eat the bread of mourners (RSV). So the Targum and the Vulgate. Cf. Hos 9:4, reading *ōnîm* for MT *ʾānāshîm*, “bread of men.” Cf. Jer 16:7; Job 4:17. 18, 19. The people, accustomed to consult Ezekiel (8:1; 14:1; 20:1), asked why he did not mourn his wife’s death. Contrast 21:12.<sup>24</sup>

**BKC 15-17:** Ezekiel acted out through his own heartbreaking experience the inner pain about to be felt by all those Israelites already in captivity.

God explained the sign to Ezekiel, possibly in a dream at night (v. 18). The tragedy of the death of Ezekiel’s wife (the delight of his eyes; cf. v. 21) would normally produce an outpouring of grief and sadness. But God told him not to lament or weep or shed any tears. He was to groan quietly and not mourn for the dead. He had to keep his personal feelings of loss bottled up inside; he was not allowed to follow normal mourning procedures (v. 17b; cf. Jer. 16:5-7).<sup>25</sup>

**the desire of your eyes.** A reference to Ezekiel’s wife, who was about to die *with a blow*; i.e., suddenly, or by a plague (cf. Num. 14:37).

God prohibited all the usual outward signs of mourning by Ezekiel at the death of his wife (vv. 17, 18), for this tragedy was small when compared to the coming destruction of the holy “sanctuary” (v. 21). In eastern societies, mourning was a public matter. God does not cruelly forbid Ezekiel the right to private grief in the loss of his wife. He did forbid all of the general signs of public mourning and sorrow.

**the desire of your eyes:** This refers to Ezekiel’s wife (see vv. 18, 21, 25). one stroke: This phrase is used elsewhere of a plague reflecting God’s wrath (see Ex. 9:14; Num. 14:37; 16:46). you shall neither mourn nor weep: This solemn command of God may be one of the hardest ever given to one of His servants. The picture of Ezekiel’s wife dying and Ezekiel not being allowed to grieve illustrated God’s pain over the death of His wife—Jerusalem—and His inability to mourn because the nation deserved the punishment. Ezekiel was called by God to “be a sign to the exiles” by demonstrating what they should do (see vv. 21–23) in response to the “death” (destruction) of their desire and delight—their nation and its capital city. What Ezekiel was commanded to accept and do illustrated the degree of personal sacrifice and separation from ordinary life that the prophetic ministry often required. A long period of mourning was the normal, ritual response to the death of a loved one in the ancient Middle East (see 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:12, 17; 3:31, 35; 15:30; 19:4; Isa. 58:5; Jer. 16:7; Mic. 1:8, 10). The expression of those in mourning was not to **bind** the **turban**, but to remove it and replace it with dust.

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<sup>24</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 24:15–16). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>25</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:15–17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**cover your lips:** This alluded to the practice of covering the lower half of the face with a veil. The **bread of sorrow** was food given to a mourner after fasting.<sup>26</sup>

**ESV: you shall not mourn or weep.** This is a unique symbolic action commanded of Ezekiel alone, not intended as a pattern for believers generally to follow (cf. John 11:35; Acts 8:2).

Now, another living parable will be acted out by Ezekiel. There have been painful ones in the past, such as having to lie down on his side for months at a time. But this one will certainly be the most taxing and emotionally painful of all. Ezekiel's beloved wife is about to die suddenly. And as if that's not enough, God tells him that he is not allowed to grieve outwardly.

Understand that God does not tell him to have no sadness. Certainly, that would be a command that would be impossible to obey. Ezekiel's wife was "the desire of his eyes." He loved her dearly.

The command God gives is that there are to be no outwards signs of his grief. There is to be no wailing, lamenting, or tears. Of course his heart would be grieved, but he was only to groan silently.

When grieving, the Jews would uncover their heads (Lev. 10:6; 21:10) to put dust on them (Josh. 7:6; 1Sam. 4:12). Instead, Ezekiel is to bind on his turban.

The Jews would also often demonstrate mourning by walking barefoot (2Sam. 15:30; Mic. 1:8). Ezekiel is told, "Put your shoes on your feet."

At a time when deep mourning would be shown by covering the mouth (2Sam. 19:4; Mic. 3:7), he was told, "Do not cover your mustache." And when people brought him "mourners' bread" (Jer. 16:7; Hos. 9:4), he was to reject it.

### **Ezekiel 24:17**

**Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men.**

**Constable:** Ezekiel would have to sorrow inwardly; he was not to do so outwardly. It was customary for relatives of a dead loved one to wail long and loud with family, friends, and even paid mourners (cf. 2 Sam. 1:17; 11:26; Mic. 1:8). But Ezekiel was to observe none of the customary acts of mourning over the death of his loved one, which included throwing dust on his head, going barefoot, covering his mustache, and eating a modest meal after a day of fasting (cf. 2 Sam. 1:12; 3:35; Jer. 16:7; Hos. 9:4).<sup>362</sup> Mourning was not appropriate in cases of capital punishment.

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<sup>26</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

**McGee:** God told him, “Don’t act like you’re mourning at all.” And the people didn’t understand it. The people came to Ezekiel and said, “What in the world does this mean? Your wife has died, and you are not mourning at all! What kind of man are you?”

All of this Ezekiel is doing to get a message through to the people. Verse 24 is the key to this entire Book of Ezekiel:<sup>27</sup>

Now that's what they would do when a person died, they remove their turban and they remove their shoes. They go around barefooted and their head bare. That is, don't let your beard grow. Now that's another thing they would do after a person, a relative had died. You'd let your beard grow for thirty days and then you'd shave the beard at the end of thirty days and you'd bring the hair and offer it in a burnt offering to God. But don't let your beard grow, don't cover your lips, that is, with your mustache and beard. That is the traditional bread of mourning. They would eat this particular kind of bread as a sign of mourning. But he is not to do any sign of the traditional mourning for the dead which the people did when his wife died.

### **Ezekiel 24:18**

**So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.**

All the way through, Ezekiel did what he was told. He was a very obedient servant of the Lord. The text does not say he could not sorrow; obviously he had feelings for his wife. Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus wept, he did not mourn him in the professional sense. The distinction between sorrow and mourning was the distinction being made. Mourning involved several procedural elements. One was the concept of having the head covered (2 Samuel 15:30). In Isaiah 22 there is the idea of bare feet. The idea of the covered lip is in Lev13:45 and Mic 3:7. So these were the formal accouterments of mourning which were denied to Ezekiel. He was not to mourn his wife, because he was symbolically representing how the Israelites would have to treat their loved ones. It was even a little more profound than that, because Ezekiel’s not mourning his wife suggests somewhat the relationship between Jehovah and Israel.<sup>28</sup>

**Constable 18-19:** In the morning of the next day, or perhaps a few days later, Ezekiel addressed the people, and that evening his wife died. The prophet faithfully did as the Lord had commanded him. His actions bewildered the exiles who asked him to explain why he was behaving so abnormally.

Ezekiel's entire life was a testimony to the exiles. Likewise, this should be the case with all who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

**BKC 18-19:** Next morning Ezekiel told the people about his vision, and that evening his wife died. The next morning, when his wife would have been buried, he followed God’s instructions and did not mourn openly. Because the event had been explained to the

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<sup>27</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 24:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>28</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, khouse.org

people in advance, they realized that the action had some national significance. So they asked him to explain what it meant.<sup>29</sup>

**did as I was commanded:** Ezekiel had been given a revelatory command that was extremely hard for him personally. He faithfully communicated it to the people. His absolute obedience to the harshest of God’s commands contrasted with the disobedience of his fellow countrymen.

Ezekiel told the Jews that morning what God had told him. And that evening, his wife died suddenly. In obedience, he did everything that God had commanded him to do. He showed no visible signs of mourning. This certainly would have been scandalous to the Jews who witnessed this. The people confronted him, demanding to know what this all meant.

### **Ezekiel 24:19**

**And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these *things are* to us, that thou doest *so*?**

The fellow exiles knew that there was some special significance to his unusual behavior. The Hebrews in exile were under suspicion because of the rebellion in Jerusalem. Thus, any public mourning would be interpreted as sympathy for the rebels. Their own survival depended upon the hiding of their grief. This implicit prohibition of mourning to Ezekiel (vv. 23, 24), then, was prophetic, and the realization of this would impress upon the people that the destruction of the city and the temple was a sovereign act of God.<sup>30</sup>

**tell us:** When obedience to God demanded unusual actions, the people’s curiosity about the reasons for such behavior was aroused, creating an opportunity for verbal witness about God’s revelation (see 12:9; 21:7 for the two previous times of similar response).

**ESV 19–24:** Such apparent indifference to bereavement was unsettling, but Ezekiel’s neighbors infer that this bizarre behavior is for their “benefit” (v. 19). The desecration of the temple would be devastating and numbing, breaking the people’s spirit, and exile would ensue. Here too is a rare glimpse of the social devastation of exile, as the corresponding losses for Ezekiel’s fellow exiles will be your sons and your daughters whom you left behind (v. 21). The recognition formula (v. 24; cf. Introduction: Style) concludes the oracle.

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<sup>29</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:18–19). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>30</sup> Believer’s Study Bible

## **Ezekiel 24:20**

**Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

**Constable 20-21:** The prophet replied that the Lord had said that He was about to destroy the temple and to slay the relatives of the exiles who remained in Jerusalem. The Jews loved the temple almost as much as Ezekiel loved his wife.

**LAN 20-24:** Ezekiel was not allowed to mourn for his dead wife in order to show his fellow exiles that they were not to mourn over Jerusalem when it was destroyed. Any personal sorrow felt would soon be eclipsed by national sorrow over the horror of the city's total destruction. The individuals would waste away because of their sins, which caused the city's destruction.

**BKC 20-24:** Ezekiel explained that the death of his wife symbolized the destruction of God's temple and the slaughter of the people of Jerusalem—people loved by those in exile. Ezekiel had lost the “delight” of his “eyes” (v. 16) and the exiles would lose Jerusalem, the delight of their eyes (cf. v. 25), to Babylon. Just as Ezekiel had experienced a great personal tragedy, so those already in captivity would feel the tragedy when they heard about Jerusalem's fall and the massacre of their loved ones (sons and daughters) there.

The Jews in captivity would be devastated by the news of Jerusalem's fall, and the magnitude of destruction would render all grief inadequate. Normally when a personal tragedy occurs, friends and relatives gather to share in the grief of the one affected and to support him in his time of anguish and loss. But when Jerusalem fell everyone was in anguish because everyone was affected. The tragedy would be so awesome that any public expression of grief would seem insignificant. The Jews already in Babylon were to avoid all public display of grief just as Ezekiel had done. They would simply waste away because of their sins while groaning among themselves. The catastrophe would send all the exiles into a state of shock and would force them to acknowledge their Lord: When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.<sup>31</sup>

## **Ezekiel 24:21**

**Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.**

**Dake:** [the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword] The desire of the eyes of Israel—the temple—was to be destroyed like the desire of Ezekiel—his wife, whose death was a sign to the people (Ezekiel 24:16-17,21). Israel's sons and daughters were

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<sup>31</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:20–24). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

also to be destroyed, and yet they were not to mourn because of the calamities befallen them (Ezekiel 24:21-23).

**Wycliffe I will profane my sanctuary.** By the action of a heathen foe (7:24; 25:3; 44:7; Dan 11:31). The Lord here looks behind secondary causes. The excellency of your strength. The Temple (cf. v. 25). 22, 23. Ezekiel was to tell the people that they would grieve silently, deeply, at the destruction of the Temple (cf. 33:10; Ps 38:8), as he had grieved for his wife. 24. Ezekiel is unto you a sign. Cf. verse 27; 12:6, 11.<sup>32</sup>

**I am about to profane My sanctuary.** The Temple would be destroyed by heathens. Just as Ezekiel's wife (*the desire of his eyes*) was taken from him (v. 16), so the exiles would lose Jerusalem (*the desire of their eyes*).

**the delight of your soul:** The meaning "affection" is likely intended here. The entire phrase means something like the "object of your affections." The Judeans had the wrong kind of pride about the temple. Instead of the temple being a place of worship and house of God—**My sanctuary**—the Judeans took pride in the building as a sign of their importance. Therefore, God was going to **profane** it by allowing the Babylonians to capture the city and destroy the temple (see v. 25; 2 Chr. 36:15–21; Lam. 1:10, 11). With no city or temple to boast about, the humbled Israelites could boast only in God's mercy.

When the people demanded to know what was going on, Ezekiel told them what this visual parable meant. God was saying that what Ezekiel had just done is what would happen to the Jews in Jerusalem. What they love would die - specifically, the temple in which they took such pride.

But their lack of mourning won't be because of self-discipline in obedience to God's command. It will be because they don't have the opportunity. They will be immediately killed or captured.

### **Ezekiel 24:22**

**And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover *your* lips, nor eat the bread of men.**

**Constable 22-24:** Ezekiel instructed the people to respond to their tragic loss as he had to his. The reason they were not to mourn publicly but only privately, though unstated, was that the judgment that God executed on Jerusalem was deserved.

Ezekiel had a right to mourn his undeserved personal loss but did not. The Israelites had no right to mourn for their well-deserved national loss and could not . . .

God is not the author of personal tragedy, but he does often use such experiences as unique opportunities and special windows through which people will come to 'know' that he is the Lord.

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<sup>32</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 24:21). Chicago: Moody Press.

**Dake:** [ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men] You (Jews) will do as I (Ezekiel) have done—not cry, mourn, cover the lips, eat food. Furthermore, you will tire your head (see note, <sup>□</sup>2 Kings 9:30), put shoes on your feet to go into captivity, pine away in your iniquities, then mourn one toward another (Ezekiel 24:23).

The Judeans should or would respond to the death of the nation as Ezekiel had been told to respond to the death of his wife (vv. 15–18): they would not mourn their loss. The consistent purpose of divine discipline is seen again: **you shall know that I am the Lord GOD** (see 6:8–10; 12:15, 16). The trials would prompt the Israelites to depend on the Lord and know that He is holy. **sign:** See 12:3–7; 24:16, 17. When Jerusalem fell, God would prove Himself as trustworthy and righteous, and Ezekiel as His true prophet (see v. 27).

### **Ezekiel 24:23**

**And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another.**

The people would mourn deeply but silently over the destruction of Jerusalem (just as Ezekiel had been commanded to do with respect to the death of his wife).

### **Ezekiel 24:24**

**Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.**

**McGee:** At that very moment, Jerusalem was being destroyed, and later on word came to the captives about its destruction: “And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten” (Ezek. 33:21). Into the camp came these stragglers; they must have looked terrible. They said, “We’ve escaped from the city. The false prophets were wrong. The city is burned. The temple has been leveled, and the city is debris and ashes.”

Ezekiel was right in not mourning. The reason they were not to mourn is found in verse 27:<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 24:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **Ezekiel 24:25**

**Also, thou son of man, *shall it not be* in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters,**

**Constable 25-26:** Evidently Ezekiel was not to deliver any more prophetic messages to his fellow exiles after he made the explanation in verses 20-24 until he received word of the destruction of the temple and the capture of the remaining Judahites. This message reached him five months later (33:21). His enforced dumbness must have been limited to prophecies concerning Israel, however, because 25:1—33:20 contains oracles against foreign nations some of which are dated during the siege of Jerusalem.

### **Wycliffe The Prophet's Ministry Released from Limitations at the City's Fall. 24:25-27.**

When tidings come of the city's fall, verifying the prophet's predictions, he is to be "no longer dumb"; the limitations will be removed, and he will be able to speak unrestrainedly to willing listeners before him.

25. In the day. Of Jerusalem's fall. 26. In that day. When the news of the city's fall reaches Babylonia. 27. Thy mouth be opened to him. In conversation with the escaped one. Be no more dumb. Cf. 3:26, 27; 33:21, 22. He can then be a watchman in the pastoral sense. His prophecies of doom will have been confirmed; he will be free to devote himself to building the new community. Thou shalt be a sign. Cf. verses 16-18.<sup>34</sup>

**BKC 25-27:** When the news of Jerusalem's fall reached the exiles, the prophet's mouth would be opened; he would no longer be silent. Ezekiel had been commanded to remain silent before his fellow exiles except to pronounce the prophecies God gave him (cf. 3:25-27). His part-time dumbness would end when the prophecies he had delivered were confirmed (cf. 33:21-22).<sup>35</sup>

### **OTS: A Personal Promise (24:25–27).**

God was about to deliver to the Jews a double blow. He would take from them their Temple. That sacred sanctuary was the very "stronghold" of their faith, the "joy of their pride." He would also take from them their sons and daughters. A fugitive from Jerusalem would come to Babylon bringing the sad news. "On that day" Ezekiel's mouth would be opened (cf. 3:26, 27). His ministry would change. He would be able to comfort and encourage them with words of hope rather than oracles of doom and stony silence. This prophet who previously had been so negative would become at that time the great encourager.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 24:25). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>35</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 24:25–27). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 24:25–27). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

**ESV 25–27:** Fugitive News. As for you, son of man. The final verses of this oracle are for Ezekiel himself, and continue the language of bereavement found in the preceding verses. The prophecy foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the arrival of a fugitive (v. 26) bearing the news. Much like Zechariah's renewed speech at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:64), Ezekiel's speech will be regained at this event, and again Ezekiel will be a sign to them, as he has been at the death of his beloved. This brief passage forges connections that span the book. Ezekiel's muteness began with the report in Ezekiel 3:26; it will be released with the arrival of the fugitive in 33:21, when the oracles about Jerusalem resume following the foreign-nation oracles (25:1–32:32).

### **Ezekiel 24:26**

***That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears?***

**Dake:** [in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears] In that day when all this will happen, you (Ezekiel) will receive the full report from those who escape the destruction; and I will open your mouth and you will not be dumb anymore as a sign to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 24:26-27).

When the **one who escapes** on the day Jerusalem falls (586 B.C.) arrives to give Ezekiel the news (perhaps about three months later), Ezekiel would be relieved of his inability to speak anything except judgment, and would be allowed to preach hope (see vv. 1, 2, 24; 3:25–27; 33:21–39:29; 2 Kin. 25:8, 9).

### **Ezekiel 24:27**

**In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.**

Back in Ezekiel 3:26, it had been prophesied that he would be struck dumb. So from the time Jerusalem fell until some 6 months later when a fugitive who had escaped the destruction finally made his way down to Babylon and verified to Ezekiel that this event had taken place, Ezekiel was not allowed to speak. But with this documentation, his mouth was opened and Ezekiel did prophesy again.<sup>37</sup>

**Constable:** When that news arrived, Ezekiel could resume speaking about Israel because the Lord would give him additional prophecies about Israel (cf. 33:21—48:35). His silence concerning Israel's affairs during the siege of Jerusalem would have been further testimony to his sorrow.

In 24:24 he is a sign of God's *judgment* and its consequences; in 24:27 he is a sign of God's *grace* and its consequences.

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<sup>37</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on the Book of Ezekiel, khouse.org

Ezekiel was to be a model for the exiles of how they should respond to the siege of Jerusalem. They should treat it as an unspeakable tragedy. Ezekiel's example would teach the exilic community that Yahweh really was God.

This is a pivotal chapter in the development of the book. Till now Ezekiel has variously proclaimed the Lord's coming judgment on Jerusalem and Judah. He has systematically answered each argument against the impending judgment. Nothing remained except for the enactment of that discipline recorded in this chapter. The beginning of Babylonia's siege of Jerusalem was described. Then Ezekiel prophesied against the foreign nations who had abused Judah and mocked her during her judgments (25:1—33:20). These foreign nations would be judged for their wicked attitude and actions toward Judah. However, the hope of future restoration and blessing would be promised to Judah.

**Dake: [no more dumb]** The reference here is no doubt to his being made dumb, and having his mouth opened only when God would speak through him to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 24:24-27). We are to understand then that the dumbness continued until Jerusalem was completely destroyed; after that he was not to be such a sign to the house of Israel anymore (Ezekiel 24:27).

**LAN:** For some time Ezekiel had not been allowed to speak except when God gave him a message to deliver to the people (Ezekiel 3:25-27). This restriction would soon end when Jerusalem was destroyed and all Ezekiel's prophecies about Judah and Jerusalem had come true (Ezekiel 33:21-22).

**McGee:** "They shall know that I am the Lord." Jerusalem was *God's* city, and the temple was *His* house. They were God's witness to the world. And when the people of Israel failed, God said, "I will destroy even My own witness on the earth. I want you to know the city is destroyed. The rest of your people are being brought into captivity. But there's no use weeping, there's no use howling to Me now. I have done this—I am responsible for it."

To each of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus said, "You had better be careful of your witness to the world, or I will come and remove your lampstand." The lampstand of all seven of those churches has been removed, my friend. Not one of those churches remains today. This ought to be a message to us: If you are a Christian and are not going to stand for God today, He will remove your lampstand—there will be no light.

This is a strong message; it is not the lovey-dovey, sloppy stuff we hear so often. This is Ezekiel, and he is speaking for God. He has said again and again, "The word of the LORD, came unto me, saying." If you want to argue with his message, take it to the Lord, but remember He's right and we are the ones who are wrong.<sup>38</sup>

When the news arrived from Jerusalem, Ezekiel would be free to speak.

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<sup>38</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 24:27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Remember that God had made Ezekiel unable to speak unless God was directing him to prophesy. He had said to the prophet back in chapter three,

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

But after the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews in exile would receive confirmation of Ezekiel's prophecies when an escapee came to them and reported everything that took place (vs. 26). When they received this information, Ezekiel would once again be able to speak freely. His ministry as a prophet would finally be accepted, and God would then be able to offer encouragement to the Jews about the glorious future God had in store for them.

<b>Unforgettable Sermons</b>		
God asked the prophet Ezekiel to perform some strange object lessons in order to get the attention of the Israelite exiles. The following chart shows the meanings of these unusual “sermon illustrations.”		
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Ezekiel’s Activity</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
4:1–3	Writing on a clay tablet	Ezekiel used a clay tablet to sketch out or build a model depicting how Babylon would lay siege to Jerusalem.
4:4–8	Lying on his side	Ezekiel lay on his side to demonstrate that the length of Babylon’s siege would correspond to the number of years Israel had sinned against their God.
4:9–17	Baking bread over dung	Ezekiel baked his bread with a fire fueled by dung, which was offensive to the Jews. Ezekiel was illustrating that their impending captivity would force them to eat polluted food that would mirror the filthiness of their sin.
5:1–4	Shaving his head	Ezekiel shaved his head as a sign of mourning. The burning of a third of his hair symbolized the fires that would destroy Jerusalem; the chopped hair stood for the people who would die by the sword; and the hair scattered in the wind represented those Jews

12:1–16	Packing his bags	who would be taken away into captivity. Ezekiel pantomimed leaving Jerusalem to prepare the watching crowds for the coming exile of the citizens of Jerusalem.
12:17–28	Quivering	Trembling and shuddering while he ate, Ezekiel acted out the awful fear the Jews would face when their enemies swept through the land.
20:45–49	Facing south and preaching to the forest	Ezekiel preached toward the south in order to show that God would send judgment on Judah, the southern kingdom.
21:1–32	Preaching about a sword while sighing	Facing Jerusalem, Ezekiel used, instead of fire, the picture of a sword to prophesy destruction. His deep sighs were intended to demonstrate the heavy hearts the people would have.
24:15–27	Refusing to mourn for his wife	God took Ezekiel's wife as a sign of the overwhelming sadness the nation would feel when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.
37:15–28	Holding two sticks together	Ezekiel pictured the restoration of Israel by writing on one stick the name of Judah and on the other the name of Joseph, and then holding them together.