

Chapter 12

Date: Between **August 13, 592 BC** (The 5th of Elul, 3,169) & **July 8, 591 BC** (The 10th of AB, 3,170)

Historical Setting: The prophet Ezekiel is living among his fellow Jewish captives in the exile community of Tel-abib just outside the capital city of Babylonia, Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar reigns during the entire time period of this chapter. King Zedekiah rules Jerusalem as a “Puppet” King under King Nebuchadnezzar's control. Jerusalem is forced to pay tribute to the Babylonians, which by 588 BC, Zedekiah stopped paying. In fact, Zedekiah hosted an anti-Babylonian conference in Jerusalem in 594 BC. He invited neighboring nations who shared in negative feelings towards Babylonia. The topic of discussion was the overthrow of Babylonian rule. Zedekiah hoped to form an alliance that would be strong enough to overthrow Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. He especially sought the support of the Egyptians, who represented probably the only force at the time who could possibly stand a chance against the great Babylonian Empire. Zedekiah left the conference feeling so confident that shortly thereafter he refused to pay Babylonian tribute. It might be assumed that the stoppage of payment to the Babylonians occurred after the revelation contained in chapter twelve was given to Ezekiel. This assumption is made based on the fact that the exiles, at this point in time, don't appear to have seen any reason as to why a Babylonian attack could happen. Though we might theorize that the Judaeans stoppage of tribute payment occurred between 592 BC and 587 BC, the events of this chapter could have occurred just prior to, or during the time period in which Zedekiah made this bold decision. The anti-Babylonian conference was held approximately two to three years prior to the revealing of this chapter to the Prophet Ezekiel. Word of the conference, and subsequent refusal of tribute, caused great anger

on the part of the Babylonians, especially to King Nebuchadnezzar. King Zedekiah and most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem were stiff-necked, prideful, and even outright wicked. During this time period, Nebuchadnezzar was involved in the expansion and beautification of Babylonia.

Preview:

The prophet Ezekiel received another series of revelations from the Lord. It would appear that the revelation was given verbally rather than in a vision as in the past few chapters. The chapter is divided into five sections. In section one, the Lord tells Ezekiel of King Zedekiah's escape from Jerusalem during its future takeover by the Babylonians. The Lord instructs Ezekiel to carry out a symbolic act before the exiles to prophesy of its occurrence. The second section of the chapter speaks of the capture and death of King Zedekiah at the hands of the Babylonians. The third sections deals with the conditions in Jerusalem during the siege by the Babylonians. The fourth and fifth sections of this chapter deal with the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecies and His graceful patience.



Verse 1: “The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying.”

The term "*word of the Lord*" typically represents a message or revelation from the Lord. It does not mean that it is necessarily delivered by the mouth of the Lord. It could mean that a messenger delivered the message or that it came in the form of vision.

Another perspective on the term "*word of the Lord*" is derived from a passage in the New Testament. The Apostle John records his version of the Gospel with the following opening statement, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (St. John 1:1). This puzzling passage is referring to the Lord, Jesus Christ. Given this symbolic verbiage for the Savior, the "*word*" spoken of in this chapter of Ezekiel might very well be referring to Jesus Christ or Jehovah.

Whatever the true definition is for the "*word of the Lord*", the meaning of the verse goes unchanged. The Prophet Ezekiel was going

to receive instruction and counsel from on high. He makes it a point to tell us exactly who the source is for the information contained hereafter.

In this chapter, the Prophet Ezekiel uses the verbiage "*the word of the Lord came unto me*" five times. We could assume that each represents either a new revelation or a break in a continuous revelation. Some would suggest that chapter twelve represents five separate and distinct revelations given at different points and times. As one reads this chapter, it becomes evident that the five different sections gave instruction and guidance to the prophet. At the close of each section, the prophet received instruction to preach or perform to the exiles. Following such, a new revelation was prompted. This line of thinking is speculative; however, it is definitely worth consideration.

Since chapter eleven ended a rather extensive vision, one might ask at what date chapter twelve occurred. Based on the date given in chapter eight of the book of Ezekiel, which was the beginning of the vision ended in chapter eleven, we assume that chapter twelve occurred after that date. This assumption is based on the fact that chapter twelve is recorded after chapters eight through eleven. The danger with this assumption is that Bible translators have been known to rearrange chapters of the Bible for their own purposes, consequently destroying the true Bible chronology. We have no reason to believe that that is the case here, but we should be aware of the possibility.

If chapter twelve is in the correct chronological order relative to the surrounding chapters, we can assume that it occurred before the date given in chapter twenty. Chapter twenty contains the next date recorded in the Book of Ezekiel. It is then proposed that chapter twelve occurred after August 13, 592 BC (The 5th of Elul, 3,169), the date given for the revelation in chapter eight, and July 8, 591 BC (The 10th of AB, 3,170), the date given for the revelation contained in chapter twenty.

Verse 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.”**

True to form, the Lord addresses Ezekiel as "*son of man*", referencing Ezekiel's mortality. This title is used for Ezekiel ninety-four times in the Book of Ezekiel as recorded in the King James version of the Bible.

The Lord once again tells Ezekiel that he lives amongst a "*rebellious house*". The term "*house*" refers to a family, community, or society. For example, the house of Pharaoh refers to the descendants of Pharaoh as well as those who have been adopted into the family. The rebellious house that is being spoken of here is the House of Israel.

More specifically, it references the Israelites who were in captivity with Ezekiel in Babylon.

The Hebrews in exile, we are told, had eyes but could not see. They also had ears but could not hear. This passage sounds a lot like double talk or non-sense. How could the whole group of exiles have eyes to see and see not, or have ears to hear and hear not? Were they all blinded and deafened? The answers to these questions lie on a spiritual level and not a physical one. In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in the latter days, the Lord explained how the mysteries of God can be learned and understood. The Lord said, *"Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory"* (Doctrine and Covenants 76:116-118). The exiles were physically capable of seeing and hearing the words of God; however, their level of comprehension was lacking due to an absence of spirituality. They no longer had the spirit of God with them individually to aid and assist in the comprehension of the matters of God.

Over one thousand years prior to Ezekiel there lived a man who dwelt among a wicked people who were described much in the same fashion as the Lord describes the Israelites of the sixth century BC.

As the prophet Enoch lived in an earth that was all but totally and utterly defiled, the Lord came to Enoch and spoke the following words.

"Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people, and say unto them - Repent, for thus saith the Lord: I am angry with this people, and my fierce anger is kindled against them; for their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off (Moses 6:27)."

The symbolism used by the Lord in addressing Enoch with regards to the people of the earth is quite similar to that spoken by the Lord to Ezekiel in this verse. In speaking of the Israelites it is recalled that the Lord said in chapter two of Ezekiel's Book, *"And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them"* (Ezekiel 2:5). The wording is different but the message contained in verse two of chapter twelve is the same.

The passage contained in chapter twelve speaks of ears not hearing and eyes not seeing. The symbolism associated with the eyes and ears could be interpreted to mean understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. In other words, the Lord has given them understanding and counsel. He has even given them the ability to understand this message, and yet they fail to comprehend His words. The bottom line is simple. Israel could not understand the prophets because they were not worthy of the spirit, which gives all men understanding.

Verse 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.”**

The word *"stuff"* was translated from a Hebrew word that should more appropriately be translated as "vessels" or "equipment". In modern terms, we might say *"suitcases"* or *"trunks"*. Likewise, the word *"removing"* was translated from a Hebrew word that should more appropriately be translated as *"exile"*. Given these two adjustments to the verse it might better read,

“Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee suitcases and trunks for exile, 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.” (verse adjusted by author)

The Lord was giving Ezekiel a task to perform. It was to be done in plain daylight and in the view of the exiles that were with Ezekiel in Babylonia. The purpose of the act which Ezekiel was instructed to perform was that they, the exiles, might understand that the Lord is God. Though the people had been warned, they had tuned out the words of the prophets. The Lord instructed the prophet to carry out this task so the exiles might give consideration to His words.

The whole verse under evaluation is a theatric representation of the Israelites being torn from their homes and moved elsewhere. Though this was not unusual for the Babylonians, who considered it common practice to relocate conquered countries, the Israelites might have considered this play somewhat after the fact since they had already been conquered by the Babylonians. Israel had already had their brightest and most skilled citizens made captives. It was to these that Ezekiel was preaching. For this reason, they probably had a hard time conceiving that Babylonia would again invade Jerusalem, and that more captives would be taken. The play that Ezekiel was to carry out would definitely have meaning to the captives, but would they truly

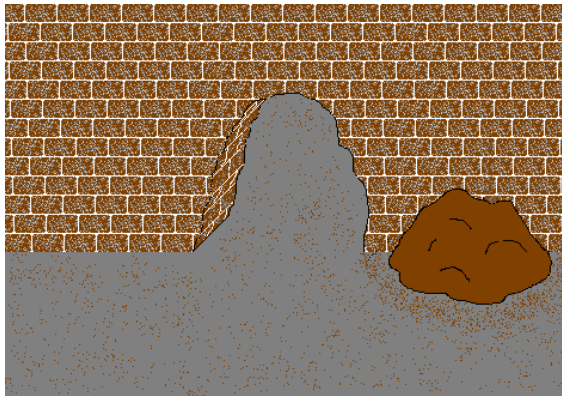
understand and believe what they were being taught? Probably not, for as the Lord said they were a rebellious house.

Verse 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.”

It would appear that the instruction given to Ezekiel in verse three was to be carried on even further. It would also seem that the Lord instructed Ezekiel to fill the containers (i.e. suitcases, and trucks) he had brought forth with his personal belongings. He was to then leave his home with his belongings, as the Lord instructed him to go forth. All of this imagery was given to the exiles to symbolize the upcoming captivity of their nation.

It should also be noted that Ezekiel was to carry out his act of packing and moving within the span of one day. This represented the quickness of the Lord's wrath and the haste by which the Jews would be required to leave Jerusalem during its eventual siege by the Babylonians.

Verse 5:



...nt, and carry out thereby.”

The play takes an interesting and probably unforeseen turn of events, even to the prophet Ezekiel. The prophet is to take his belongings to a wall. This wall might or might not have been

the wall of the city of Tel Abib or even Babylon, but it was a representation of the city walls of Jerusalem. It was at a wall in an unknown location in Babylonia, that the prophet was to begin digging. He was to dig through the wall and then transport himself and his belongings through the hole he had made in the wall.

The meaning of this portion of the play becomes much more evident when one becomes more familiar with the history of Jerusalem during the siege. The Jewish scholar Flavius Josephus recorded the following passage.

"Now the city was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah. They were indeed only generals of the king of Babylon, to who Nebuchadnezzar committed the care of the siege,

*for he abode himself in the city of Riblah. The names of these generals who ravaged and subdued Jerusalem, if any desires to know them, were these: Nergal Sharezer, Samgar Nebo, Rabsaris, Sarsechim, and Rabmag; and when **the city was taken about midnight**, and the enemies generals were entered into the temple, and when **Zedekiah was sensible of it, he took his wives and his children, and his captains and friends, and with them fled out of the city, through the fortified ditch**, and through the desert; and when certain of the deserters had informed the Babylonians of this, at break of day, they made haste to pursue after Zedekiah, and overtook him not far from Jerico, and encompassed him about” (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book X, Chapter VIII, Verse 2, page 220).*

Tradition teaches that King Zedekiah fled Jerusalem through the King's Gardens in Jerusalem. He did this after a Babylonian siege that lasted approximately 18 months; at the end of which, the Babylonians broke down the city walls and within a span of one day destroyed the city and removed thousands of Jews captive into Babylonia. The siege, we are told, began on the 10th of Tebet 3,173. This date translates to our modern calendar as the 11th of December 589 BC. The end of the siege, which is the time this chapter is discussing, occurred on the 9th of Tammuz 3,174 or the 30th of June 587 BC. According to Josephus, the city of Jerusalem was taken at midnight by the Babylonians. At almost the same time at which the city fell, King Zedekiah and his closest allies dug through the "fortified ditch" and escaped the city that was falling around them. The ditch spoken of by Josephus was most likely a hole in the city walls where either sewage or water was allowed to exit or enter. Such penetrations in the city walls were typically fortified by either bars or spaced columns of bricks. It would appear that King Zedekiah and his following dug out the fortified ditch that penetrated the city wall in the King's Garden and from there made their escape from the city.

The King's Gardens are spoken of periodically in the Old Testament. We assume them to be the same Royal Gardens built by David and Solomon in Jerusalem. The location of the Royal Gardens are believed to have been in the southwest corner of the city of Jerusalem where the Kedron and Hinnom valley's converged. It was on the outskirts of the fortification and represented no military threat, making it an obvious location for Zedekiah's exodus. There were probably few, if any, Babylonian soldiers in the area and the nearby terrain made it good for concealing one's escape. The following map shows Jerusalem as it might have been laid out at the time of Herod.

The possible location of the Royal or King's Gardens are depicted on the map.

The City of Jerusalem

Showing the location of the Royal Gardens where Zedekiah fled Jerusalem



Verse 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.”

Through the hole Ezekiel made in the Babylonian wall, the Prophet was to carry all of his belonging on his shoulders. This was to send a couple of messages to it’s viewers. King Zedekiah and his followers were only going to be able to take with them those personal belongings that they could physically carry. They would have no time

or opportunity to gather more, nor was it possible to escape with carts. The escape from the city would be quick and desperate.

Ezekiel was to act out the actual transit through the wall in the twilight. The twilight represents the dark of night. This part of Ezekiel's play has already been discussed, in that Zedekiah and his company left the city around midnight. Due to the darkness, the prophet is told that he would not be able to see the ground. The word "ground" was translated from a Hebrew word that would more appropriately be translated as "land". In either case, the message is clear. The exodus from Jerusalem would be made in the dark.

The Lord closes this verse by stating that Ezekiel was sent to perform this play as a sign to the children of Israel as to what was to shortly come to pass.

Verse 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.”**

Like everything we have read about Ezekiel, he remained faithful to Lord's requests. The Lord had outlined a very distinct play for him to perform, and he carried out the commands of God.

Ezekiel packed his belongings from his home, and carried them as if he was being brought into exile. He took his belongings to a wall of unknown location, though we assume that is in the near proximity of Tel-Abib. The prophet then digs a hole in the wall in the even. The word "even" was translated from a Hebrew word that would more appropriately be translated as "evening". The fact that Ezekiel dug with his hands and without a shovel represents the desperation of the exodus. There doesn't appear to have been much planning involved in the exodus. Following the digging through the wall in the evening, which must have taken quite a while, Ezekiel says that he took his belongings through the wall in the twilight. The twilight is again the dark of night, usually after midnight.

Verse 8: **“And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying.”**

This verse represents the second section of chapter twelve. One can suppose it to be the second revelation given to Ezekiel in a series of revelations. It would appear that after Ezekiel carried out the Lord's commands, he sent him further light and knowledge. Significantly, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the morning after he played out King

Zedekiah's escape which history explains is the time at which the Babylonians went after Zedekiah.

Verse 9: “**Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?**”

The Lord starts this revelation with an interesting question. He asks the prophet if the exiles had asked him what he was doing as he performed the play. This introductory question, we will find, is just the start of a series of explanations the Lord gives to Ezekiel in the following verses.

As a side note, the Lord refers to the exiles as a rebellious house. It would appear that the exiles were still wicked. Despite the fact that the Lord had humbled them by carrying them into captivity, and sent to them a prophet of extreme faith who had spoken to them with the spirit of God, they still failed to see the light.

Verse 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.**”

As mentioned in the commentary for chapter eleven, the term "*prince*" is the word translators used to represent Israel's leaders, such as governors, magistrates, and senators. In this case it is used to represent the chief prince, King Zedekiah. It would now appear that Ezekiel has been acting in the star role of "Zedekiah" during the entire play. Though it would also appear that at times he represented the Israelites as a whole. The play represents the burden or wrath that would be unleashed on Jerusalem and King Zedekiah.

Verse 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.**”

The Lord tells Ezekiel to explain that Ezekiel was acting his play out before them as a sign to those in Jerusalem. The play was a prophetic act of things that would shortly come to pass. They were going to be removed from Jerusalem and taken to Babylonia as captives. History dictates that this indeed happened.

Verse 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.”

The prince, as discussed previously, is none other than King Zedekiah. He was among the group that attempted to flee the city at its fall. They bore the baggage of their exile on their own persons as they fled. The term “*shoulder*” doesn't necessarily mean that they carried their baggage on their literal shoulders. It is just a representation for the fact that they had no carts or other means of transportation other than their own selves. They left under the cover of dark, and it would appear that they used clothing to help conceal themselves in the darkness. With the darkness, the baggage they carried, and the clothing used to conceal them in the darkness, it would appear they had a difficult time even seeing the ground during their escape.

Verse 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.”**

It was briefly discussed in the commentary for verse eight that the Babylonians went after Zedekiah and his clan in the morning after their exodus. The Lord states in this verse that he spread His net after them. The net is a symbolic representation for captivity and capture. The Lord explains that despite their attempts of escape, He would have them captured and taken captive into Babylon, which is in the Land of the Chaldeans. For further commentary on the land of the Chaldeans see Appendix A, The History of Babylon the Great.

The great Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus wrote of the prophetic fulfillment of this chapter. He recorded the following.

“But for those friends and captains of Zedekiah who had fled out of the city with him, when they saw their enemies near them, they left him and dispersed themselves, some one way and some another, and every one resolved to save himself; so the enemy took Zedekiah alive, when he was deserted by all but a few, with his children and his wives, and brought him to the king. When he was come, Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch, and a covenant-breaker, and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him. He also reproached him in his ingratitude, that when he had received the kingdom from him, who had taken it from Jehoiachin, and gave it him, he had made use of the power he gave him against

him that gave it: 'but,' said he, 'God is great, who hateth that conducted of thine, and hath brought thee under us.' And when he had used these words to Zedekiah, he commanded his sons and his friends to be slain, while Zedekiah and the rest of the captains looked on; after which he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him, and carried him to Babylon. And these things happened to him, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold to him, that he should be caught, and brought before the king of Babylon, and should speak to him face to face, and should see his eyes with his own eyes; and thus far did Jeremiah prophesy. But he was also made blind, and brought to Babylon, but did not see it, according to the prediction of Ezekiel (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book X, Chapter VIII, Verse 2, page 220)".

It would appear that the verse under evaluation caused some contention among the Jews. The prophet Ezekiel explained to the Exiles that the Lord had told him, "I will bring him", King Zedekiah, "to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there." Somehow the Jew perceived that Ezekiel taught that Zedekiah would never lay eyes on Babylonia, meaning that he would never go there. Similarly, the Prophet Jeremiah was preaching among the Jews in Jerusalem at about the same time that Ezekiel was preaching to the exiles in Babylonia. Tradition says Jeremiah taught that Zedekiah would be taken captive into Babylonia. The Jews took the two prophecies (as they perceived them) and argued that the prophets contradicted each other. They argued that neither man could truly be a prophet of God because if they were, their prophecies would coincide.

We find that **both** prophets were right. Jeremiah records, "And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death" (Jeremiah 52:10-11). Zedekiah never saw Babylon; however, he was taken there and lived there until he died.

Verse 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."

Referring back to the passage written by Josephus quoted in the commentary for verse thirteen it should be pointed out that all of the

people that accompanied Zedekiah on his escape scattered when they saw the Babylonians approaching them. Each man and woman apparently dropped all loyalty for the King and ran for his or her own life. It is this act that verse fourteen is referring to when it says that the Lord scattered them toward every wind. The word "bands" was translated from a Hebrew word that would more appropriately be translated as "troops". Though Josephus does not make mention of Zedekiah being accompanied by troops, it would seem logical. The Bible does record that Zedekiah was accompanied by his army. The Book of Kings records,

*"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. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 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. 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. 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**" (2nd Kings 25:1-5).*

An ancient proverb of Israel taught, "A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them" (Proverbs 20:26). So it was with Israel, the true King of Israel, God, scattered his wicked children and brought the wheel after them. Here the term "wheel" references chariots and vehicles of war. It is used to symbolize war, wrath, and destruction. It should be recalled that several years prior to the contents of this chapter, Ezekiel performed another symbolic act to prophesy against the Israelites. The Lord instructed Ezekiel to cut his hair and divide it into three parts. The hair represented the Israelites. With that hair the Lord commanded Ezekiel to do as follows.

*"Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and **a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.** Thou shalt also take*

*thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts
(Ezekiel 5:2-3)."*

The symbolic term "sword" is used once again by the Lord. Like the term "*wheel*" used by the author of the proverb just discussed, the sword is used to symbolize death, destruction, war, and conflict. Such was the fate that awaited those that fled with Zedekiah.



Verse 15: **"And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries."**

In this verse, the Lord makes reference to a different scattering. This is not the scattering for Zedekiah and his troops, but the scattering of the children of Israel throughout the world. Having hindsight, we can see how the Lord scattered the children of Israel through every nation and tongue. Today there is hardly a place on the face of the earth that doesn't contain the blood of the Jews. The Lord scattered them that they might come to the knowledge that He is the Lord.

Verse 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."**

In a past prophetic play, the Prophet Ezekiel placed a few of the hairs that the Lord told him to shave from his head and beard into the hem of his skirt. As stated earlier, the hair in Ezekiel's play represented the Israelites. They were to be spared from all of the turmoil that has already been discussed. Who were these "*few men*"? They could have been the small group of Jews that were allowed to return to Jerusalem from Babylon after its fall. They could also be the few Jews that actually remained in Jerusalem after the great siege of 589-587 BC. As a final possibility, they could be the exiles in Babylonia of which a few returned to Jerusalem at the end of the Babylonian Empire. Those who

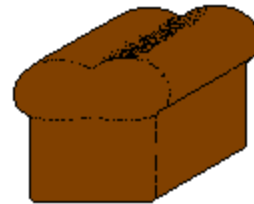
survived the Lord's wrath would play a very important role for future righteous generations of the Lord's children. They would be spared to bear testimony of the existence and divinity of the Lord.

Verse 17: **“Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying.”**

This verse represents the third section of chapter twelve. We suppose it to be the third revelation given to Ezekiel in a series of revelations.

Verse 18: **“Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness:”**

The Lord is apparently setting the stage for yet another prophetic play. He tells the Prophet Ezekiel to eat bread with quaking. The term “*bread*” is often used to represent food in general. Ezekiel was instructed to eat his bread, or food, with quaking. This conveyed the idea of nervousness and anxiety. Similarly, Ezekiel was told to drink water with trembling and carefulness. The word “*carefulness*” was translated from a Hebrew word that should more appropriately be translated as apprehension or anxiety. It would appear that Ezekiel was



to drink water with the same apprehension that he used for eating bread. It is interesting that the Lord choose to say bread and water and not some other symbol like meat and wine. Bread and water are usually considered the basest of foods. Our society usually considers a diet of bread and water, the menu for hardened criminals in prison. It was this diet which Ezekiel was to eat with anxiety, having fear that even the basest of nourishment might be revoked.

Verse 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.”

The Prophet was instructed by the Lord and the actions of the play which he conducted were defined, that is the eating bread and water with anxiety. He was to reveal the message contained in the play to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The message was that they would eat their bread and water with carefulness and astonishment. Note that the words of anxiety relating to the bread and water in verse eighteen are different from those that are used in this verse. The word "astonishment" used in this verse was translated from a Hebrew word that should more appropriately be translated as "dismay". What did the Lord mean by eating in dismay, anxiety, and carefulness? The Psalmist wrote, *"He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein"* (Psalm 107:33-34). The Lord was warning the inhabitants of Jerusalem of famine and drought. The day was approaching when food and water would be scarce. Each morsel of food and trickle of water would be partaken of as if it might be the last. The purpose was to help the Israelites realize that it was a result of their wickedness, or violence, as the verse says.

Verse 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.”**

Through historical records, we understand that there was very little left of Jerusalem after the Babylonians were finished with it in 587 BC. The Babylonians stripped the city of anything of value and carried it back to Babylonia. They broke down the walls and leveled brick houses. The temple of God was burned and toppled. So great was the destruction that it is said that the few people that remained behind had to live in tents outside the temple because Jerusalem was uninhabitable. Truly, the Lord laid the city in waste and the land desolate. It would even appear that the Babylonians destroyed the surrounding cities.

Verse 21: **“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying.”**

This verse represents the fourth section of chapter twelve. One would suppose it to be the fourth revelation given to Ezekiel in a series of revelations.

Verse 22-23: “Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? 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.”

Apparently the inhabitants of Israel had adopted an evil proverb, “*The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?*” This proverb conveyed the idea that the days of judgement were prolonged or extended, and the words of the prophets failed to come to fruition. The wrath of the Lord brought about such visions in the form of a Babylonian siege. It is interesting that this proverb is not found anywhere in the Bible. The Lord left a testimony to the surety of His words. He instructs Ezekiel to tell the Israelites that the days of the fulfillment of His words are near and the effect, or fulfillment, of every vision will occur.

Verse 24: “For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.”

The Prophet that even Jesus Christ called great, Isaiah, once said, “*The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail*” (Isaiah 9:15). The city of Jerusalem had developed far too many tails and not enough heads. They had developed a society full of preachers and false prophets who taught only what the people wanted to hear. The Prophet Jeremiah, who lived among that very society, wrote, “*The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so...*” (Jeremiah 5:31). The Lord later explained to Jeremiah, “*...The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart*” (Jeremiah 14:14).

What is a vain vision and a flattering divination? The term vain means fruitless, lacking substance, or not yielding the desired outcome. A vision is a revealing or evidence of something to come or something that is hidden from one’s knowledge. It is usually associated with divinity. Israel was evidently full of men professing to be prophets, but whose visions or words of prophesy lacked substance or the ability to come to fruition. Similarly, a flattering divination is almost the same as a vain vision. The term “*flattering*” carries the idea of complimenting, pleasing, or gratifying in an insincere and meaningless fashion. The term “*divination*” is the word used to describe the ability to foresee the

future and reveal hidden truths. Apparently, the so called prophets and elders in Israel would come up with prophecies that predicted a future which pleased the people of Jerusalem. They basically told the people what they wanted to hear. Of course, hearing what you want to hear is always easier to accept than bearing the sometimes-difficult truth. The problem with this is eventually the truth must always be faced. After Jerusalem fell, the sources of these visions and divinations were eliminated. A true prophet of God who survived Jerusalem's destruction wrote, *"Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment"* (Lamentations 2:14).

Verse 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."**

Somehow, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had adopted the idea that God's words do not always come to pass. The Lord obviously fulfills all of His words, but in His own due time. The Lord taught the prophet Isaiah *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"* (Isaiah 55:11). In modern times the Lord clarified just how binding His words are when spoken. He said, *"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated. And the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed..."* (Doctrine and Covenants 1:2-5).

Perhaps one of the most confusing issues for the average middle class Israelite in Ezekiel's time was discerning between a true prophet and a false prophet. There were many who were appealing to the desires of man instead of the direction of God. We are in much the same situation. Like the early days of Joseph Smith's life, there are many who say *"Lo here, and lo there"*. In other words, there are many that would profess to know the truth, but the big question is how do we know what the truth is when we hear it spoken. The answer to that question lies in prayer and study. As we do these two things, the real author of all truth will manifest the truth and reveal the prophecies of corruption. The Lord told Joseph Smith, *"Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth*

pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:37-38).

Verse 26: “**Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying.**”

This verse represents the fifth section of chapter twelve. We suppose it to be the fifth revelation given to Ezekiel in a series of revelations.

Verse 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.**”

Apparently, the Israelites had adopted yet another dangerous practice. Even when they recognized a prophesy from God, they procrastinated preparing for its fulfillment by justifying that it was in the distant future. They had adopted the attitude of, “*why repent of something today when you could do it tomorrow*”? They did not understand what the prophet Amos understood clearly. Amos wrote, “*Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near*” (Amos 6:3). He who does not repent today risks the fact that there might never be a tomorrow.

Verse 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.**”

The prophet Isaiah taught God's “*...thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways*” His “*ways*” (Isaiah 55:8-9). Just because we feel that life should proceed a certain way, or that something is justified, does not mean it is right in the sight of God. He has the ability of seeing the overall picture. He can see aspects of our lives that are hidden to us. With this knowledge, and a pure love for us, He directs our lives as much as we allow Him to do so. This direction does not often make sense to us. Like a four-year-old who doesn't understand why he can't play in the backyard in the rain, we often respond in similar fashion to the guidance of the Lord. We rebel and murmur at the Lord's counsel like the four-year-old who throws a fit and talks back to his loving parent who is only looking out for his best interests. Eventually, the young child feels the wrath of his parent. He might be sent to his room, or something that he likes might be denied such as cartoon time. This of course only comes after the parent attempts to explain and talk to the child in hopes of creating

understanding. The Lord treats us in much the same manner. In this verse, we find that our Father in Heaven had pleaded, explained, and counseled with Israel long enough. It is apparent that they are ignoring His words. Consequently, they will feel the Lord's wrath. His patience has worn thin and the words of warning which He issued will be fulfilled.



**Chapter
Summary:**

This chapter contains either a series of revelations, or a continuous revelation that is divided into sections. The revelation(s) contained in chapter twelve are received from the Lord by his prophet Ezekiel. It would appear that the revelation was given verbally rather than in a vision as in the past few chapters. The chapter is divided into five sections. The sections can be summarized as follows.

Section	Verses	Content
1	1-7	The Lord tells Ezekiel of King Zedekiah's escape from Jerusalem during the prophesied takeover by the Babylonians. The Lord instructs Ezekiel to carry out a symbolic act before the exiles to prophesy of its occurrence. Ezekiel took all of his belongings and packed them on his own person all the way to the city wall. He then dug through the wall with his hands to signify Zedekiah's escape.
2	8-16	The Lord reveals to Ezekiel the eventual capture and death of King Zedekiah. Ezekiel learns that Zedekiah's eyes will be put out and the King will be taken captive into Babylon where he would live as a blind prisoner until the time of his death
3	17-20	The Lord reveals the conditions that will exist in Jerusalem during the siege. Much of this is elaborated on in other chapters within Ezekiel's work.
4	21-25	The Lord tells Ezekiel of the many false prophets who preach to the Israelites. He tells the prophet of the kind of prophecies they offer the people and the fate of such prophets. The Lord tells Ezekiel that all of His words will be fulfilled.
5	26-28	The Lord explains that all of the prophecies issued in His name will come to fruition. He also explains that many had felt His words were void since he had been patient and withheld His wrath. His patience, however, is finished and the day of His wrath is at hand.

