

Ezekiel's Message for Our Time

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The prophet Ezekiel issued a number of warnings to different nations, but their fulfillment was not always intended to be imminent. Therefore, before examining these, it is important to establish the time frame. Specifically, were they meant to be fulfilled during Ezekiel's lifetime or in the future, perhaps even thousands of years after his death? As we will see, one prophecy in the 6th and 7th chapter of his book pertains to a specific group of people living in this generation. Before confirming this fact, and examining Ezekiel's message, a quick review of history is necessary.

In the opening verses of the 6th chapter of Ezekiel, the message is directed toward the nation of Israel, which had been taken into captivity during a period of time from 726 – 721 BCE by Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria (Eze. 6:1-3).

*In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah (based in Jerusalem), **Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years.** ²And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him. ³Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. ⁴And the king of Assyria uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. ⁵Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. ⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea, **the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to***

***Assyria**, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and the cities of the Medes (2Kgs. 17:1-6; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

This confirms that the descendants of 10 sons of Jacob were located in Samaria, which is north of Jerusalem. The remaining descendants of Jacob consisted of Judah, Levi, and some from Benjamin who lived in Jerusalem until the Babylonian captivity, which occurred approximately 598/7 and 587/6 BCE (1Kgs. 12:21, 23; 2Chron. 11:1). Therefore, when Ezekiel issued his prophecy about the descendants of Israel, he was not referring to those from Judah, Levi, or Benjamin, who are collectively referred to as "the Jews" (2Chron. 32:18). Instead, he was addressing primarily the descendants of Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) who are Israelites, but not Jews.

Ezekiel lived approximately 622 – 570 BCE, but the descendants of Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) had been taken captive and removed from their homeland two centuries before Ezekiel's warning. Therefore, when Ezekiel describes various forms of judgment against "Israel", he was not referring to events that would occur in his lifetime. Instead, Ezekiel was describing what will occur at a future date. In order to establish the approximate time for the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, certain trends need to be identified within the 6th and 7th chapters of Ezekiel's book. One of these trends involves an increase in violence and lawless behavior.

***Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness; none of them** (involved with this behavior) *shall remain, none of their multitude, none of them; nor shall there be**

wailing for them (Eze. 7:11; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

*Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and **the city is full of violence** (Eze. 7:23; emphasis added).*

Violence takes many forms including, but not limited to, divorce which is violence against children, exploiting the poor, fatherless, widows through predatory business practices/ schemes/ loans; partiality in judgment against the poor, fatherless and widows, by not upholding God's law and commandments within a nation's legal system. Violence against vulnerable people who make the mistake of trusting those in authority within religious organizations. Finally, out and out rebellion and violence by radical elements who want to destroy a society (see study: *Entering America's Darkest Chapter*).

*The conspiracy of her (Israel's) prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; **they have made many widows in her midst.** ²⁶**Her priests have violated My law** and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths (which include God's appointed Holy Days), so that I am profaned among them. ²⁷**Her princes** (leaders) **in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain** (Eze. 22:25-27; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

When a nation's leaders conduct themselves in this manner, the population at large copies them to one degree or another.

The people of the land have used oppression, committed robbery, and

mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger (Eze. 22:29; emphasis added).

Jesus Christ's disciples asked when he would return to rule this planet, and he confirmed that this lawless behavior would be a prelude to this event.

*And because **lawlessness will abound**, the love of many will grow cold (Mt. 24:12; emphasis added).*

According to what Ezekiel foretold, no one will be spared from the trouble that God will bring upon the descendants of Israel due to their sinful conduct, and this judgment will occur suddenly.

*For the seller shall not return to what has been sold, though he may still be alive; for **the vision concerns the whole multitude**, and it shall not turn back; no one will strengthen himself who lives in iniquity (sin; 1Jn. 3:4) (Eze. 7:13; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

*For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then **sudden destruction comes upon them**, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape (1Thes. 5:2-3; emphasis added).*

The pursuit of material things is central to Israel's demise because they do not seek God's values, as summarized by His law and commandments.

*They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because **it became their stumbling block of iniquity** (Eze. 7:19; emphasis added).*

Even though the descendants of 10 of Jacob's sons' families are scattered among other nations, they will not be protected from God's judgment. However, a remnant will escape.

*In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate, so that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, your idols may be broken and made to cease, your incense altars may be cut down, and **your works may be abolished.** ⁷The slain shall fall in your midst, and (then) you shall know that I am the Lord. ⁸Yet **I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries.** ⁹Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations (Eze. 6:6-9; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

In Ezekiel 6:9, Israel is described as "playing the harlot after their idols." This may seem like a foreign concept today; so putting this into a modern perspective, "*Whatever, or whoever, replaces God in one's life is regarded as an idol. This includes one's priorities.*"

For instance, if pleasing one's family is more important than obeying God's laws, this is a form of idolatry.

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me (Mt. 10:37).

An extreme example of this is Abraham being told to sacrifice his son Isaac. In other words, would Abraham obey God's command, or would

he disobey and choose to save his son's life instead.

And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹²And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me (Gen. 22:10-12).

There are many easier tests than the one Abraham endured, but most people would fail at these. One simple example pertains to observing pagan holidays, disguised as being "Christian." If it was clearly shown that Christmas, New Year, and Easter celebrations are contrary to God's word and will, how many would stop observing them (see website section entitled: *God's Holy Days*)?

Returning to the 6th and 7th chapter of Ezekiel, it has been shown that the message pertains to 10 specific families that descended from Jacob. These people were progressively scattered among other nations beginning around 726 – 721 BCE, and by the time of Ezekiel's writing they had not lived in Samaria for about two centuries. Now we can examine the warning that applies to them today.

Thus says the Lord God: "Pound your fists and stamp your feet, and say, 'Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. ¹²He who is far off shall die by the pestilence, he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged shall die by the famine. Thus I will spend My fury upon them (Eze. 6:11-12).

So I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land desolate, yes, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, in all their

habitations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord (Eze. 6:14).

Another prophet, who was a contemporary of Ezekiel, confirmed that this will be the time of "Jacob's trouble", culminating with the resurrection of King David.

*Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and **it is the time of Jacob's trouble**, but he shall be saved out of it. ⁸For it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them (the bondage of deception fostered by Satan and the fallen angels; cf. Isa. 14:16-17). ⁹(Instead of Satan) **they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king whom I will raise up for them** (Jer. 30:7-9; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

However, just prior to Christ's return and the resurrection of King David, there will be a great deal of upheaval and destruction as described by Ezekiel.

*Destruction comes; they will seek peace, but there shall be none. ²⁶Disaster will come upon disaster, and rumor will be upon rumor (cf. Mt. 24:21-26). Then **they will seek a vision from a prophet; but the law will perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders** (cf. Amos 8:11-12). ²⁷The king (national leadership) will mourn, the prince will be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the common people will tremble. I will do to them according to their way, and according to what they deserve I will judge them; then they shall know that I am the Lord (Eze. 7:25-27; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

One of the main reasons that Ezekiel's message to the descendants of Israel is ignored is due to

the "cunning" deceptions of Satan and the fallen angels (Gen. 3:1; 2Cor. 4:3-4; Rev. 12:9).

*Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ²that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken by the holy prophets [including Ezekiel's warning], and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, ³knowing this first: that **scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴and saying, "Where is the promise of his [Christ's] coming?** For since the [fore] fathers fell asleep [died], all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation (2Pet. 3:1-4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

These scoffers are functioning primarily in the spirit realm, but they are still capable of influencing the attitudes of human beings. The greatest scoffer of all time is Satan who refuses to listen to his heavenly Father's correction, even though it is for his ultimate good.

A wise son (Jesus Christ; cf. 1Cor. 1:24) heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer (Satan) does not listen to rebuke (Prov. 13:1; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The greatest scoffer of all time is also the proudest being that has ever existed.

***Your** (Satan's) **heart was proud** because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I (God) cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you (Eze. 28:18; Ed. notes in parentheses added; emphasis added).*

*A proud and haughty man - "Scoffer" is his name; **he acts with arrogant pride** (Prov. 21:24; emphasis added).*

Once the greatest scoffer of all time is removed by Jesus Christ (Rev. 20:1-4), all conflicts will end and peace will permeate this planet.

Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease (Prov. 22:10).

As cunning as Satan thinks he is, his proclivity to scoff at God is regarded as foolishness because it contributes to mankind committing sin by not taking God, or His law and commandments, seriously.

*The devising of foolishness is sin, and **the scoffer is an abomination to men*** (Prov. 24:9; emphasis added).

So everyone who ignores, or scoffs at God's warning through His prophet Ezekiel about the conduct of Israel's modern-day descendants, will reap the consequences described in the 6th and 7th chapters of Ezekiel's book. In contrast, everyone who takes his warning seriously and acts on it, will have the opportunity to repent and change the course they are currently on. In which case they will avoid the consequences of sin, which is everlasting death (Rom. 6:23a).

For You have been a strength to the poor (humble in attitude), a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat (of trials and tribulation); for the blast of the terrible ones (Satan and the fallen angels; cf. Eph. 6:12) is as a storm against the wall (Isa. 25:4; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Hopefully, many will respond positively to Ezekiel's message and avoid the scenario he described because it is coming closer by the day (Heb. 3:15).

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