

**Ezekiel**  
**December 16, 2007**  
**Chapters 4-7, Emphasis Chapter 4**

**I. Can God Break the Law?**

In this chapter, God tells Ezekiel to break the law in ways that would have seemed important to him. First Ezekiel is asked to make images on the clay tablet, which Ezekiel does. Then, he is asked to touch human waste material, which would make Ezekiel unclean. Ezekiel asks about this one, and God allows him to use cow manure in its place.

**II. Nebuchadnezzar**

There are four symbolic acts from 4:1 to 5:4 to portray the desolation of the siege at Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar is leading the siege. Jerusalem had already been sacked twice, one of those times leading to Ezekiel being deported. Another attack seemed unlikely until Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon.

Throughout the book of Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar is God's sword. God uses him to punish Judah and its neighbors. Daniel 4 indicates that Nebuchadnezzar eventually becomes a believer. Ezekiel does not refer negatively to this king anywhere in his book.

**III. The Act**

**Ezek 4:1-3**

**4:1 "Now, son of man, take a clay tablet, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. 2 Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. 3 Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel.**

**NIV**

The "iron pan" was to represent impenetrable wall of the besieging army. Some say that this also represents the impregnable barrier between God and man because of sin. When Ezekiel sets his face against the city, he represents those besieging it. In a sense, since he also represented God, he represented God's agreement with the siege. God has become the enemy of those in the city.

**IV. Getting Ezekiel Ready for Service**

**Ezek 4:4-8**

**4 "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the house of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. 5 I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel. 6 "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. 7 Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her. 8 I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege.**

**NIV**

A full understanding of the 390 and 40 days is not known. There are different theories, relating them to the reign of various kings. Usually, the days are assumed to be years. The point is that the Israelites have been sinning for a long time and are therefore ready for righteous punishment from God.

The change in position probably represents a change in the human status. How God ties up Ezekiel is not fully identified unless we take the words literally. Ezekiel probably had breaks in this routine, perhaps when the people were not looking.

Why would God order Ezekiel to do such acts? What would the deportees think about it when they saw it? The acts were really for their benefit (and for ours).

## **V. Further Acts**

**Ezek 4:9-13**

**9 "Take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them in a storage jar and use them to make bread for yourself. You are to eat it during the 390 days you lie on your side. 10 Weigh out twenty shekels of food to eat each day and eat it at set times. 11 Also measure out a sixth of a hin of water and drink it at set times. 12 Eat the food as you would a barley cake; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel." 13 The LORD said, "In this way the people of Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where I will drive them."**

**NIV**

Sieges cause famine. 20 shekels would be about 8 or 9 ounces. Ezekiel is acting out the way in which the besieged Jerusalemites would have to live. Human excrement is used as fuel, because there is nothing else.

How would you react if someone told you to behave as God told Ezekiel acted?

## **VI. Objection**

**Ezek 4:14-15**

**14 Then I said, "Not so, Sovereign LORD! I have never defiled myself. From my youth until now I have never eaten anything found dead or torn by wild animals. No unclean meat has ever entered my mouth." 15 "Very well," he said, "I will let you bake your bread over cow manure instead of human excrement."**

**NIV**

Ezekiel does not want to eat defiled food, yet God does not strike him dead. Clearly, if the LORD told him to do it, it would not be wrong. However, Ezekiel's training takes over and his conscience speaks.

Discussion Point: Would Ezekiel have done wrong if he had eaten the food cooked over human excrement? Did he do wrong by not doing it? Would he have done wrong if he had not complained?

## **VII. Destruction of Jerusalem**

**Ezek 5:1-4**

**5:1 "Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair. 2 When the days of your siege come to an end, burn a third of the hair with fire inside the city. Take a third and strike it with the sword all around the city. And scatter a third to the wind. For I will pursue them with drawn sword. 3 But take a few strands of hair and tuck them away in the folds of your garment. 4 Again, take a few of these and throw them into the fire and burn them up. A fire will spread from there to the whole house of Israel.**

**NIV**

The hairs are to be divided into three parts with the disposition being:

1. A third will be burned...indicating the burning and the sacking of the city.
2. A third will be killed with the sword, probably after the city has fallen to the sword.
3. A third will be scattered to the wind, which includes that they are dispersed into the Diaspora.

Of those that survive Jerusalem, only a few will survive in Judah or captivity. Indeed, many already in the Diaspora will also be destroyed when Jerusalem falls. Those who remain in Judah will have the hardest time of all.

The destruction of the nation of Israel is described in Deut. 28-30 and Lev. 27. It was the result of several cycles of sin and punishment.

Why do we go on sinning even though we know the ultimate end?

## **VIII. Ezekiel 5:5-7:27**

Further explanation of the events of chapters 4:1-5:4 are not provided in these three chapters.

## **IX. Some Questions for the First Three Chapters**

1. For how many days did Ezekiel lie on his right side?
2. On his left side?
3. As example of last resort for food, what did Ezekiel eat?
4. What fraction of Jerusalem's residents escaped immediate death at the downfall of Jerusalem?
5. What was Judah's grievous offense?
6. By what means did the people die?
7. What king carried out God's judgment on Judah?
8. Why did God allow this punishment to occur? Could not God find a better way to punish Judah?
9. Where were the centers of idolatry located?
10. Why did Ezekiel prophesize against the mountains?
11. When God punishes, what attributes does He display?
12. When God spares, what attributes does He display?
13. List out what actions that God is taking against the Israelites. List out also the sins of the Israelites.
14. Why does Ezekiel talk so much about God's judgment?

## **X. Repetition**

Ezekiel through God's direction takes 24 chapters to communicate over and over and over the impending destruction of Jerusalem. For us, with our modern minds, this seems like both overkill and redundancy.

Why does God take so long to communicate this message?

How do we know when God is trying to speak in our lives? Are we willing to listen? Or are we like the deportees who only wanted what they wanted, regardless of what God says?

## **XI. Conclusion**

**Ezek 7:25-27**

**25 When terror comes, they will seek peace, but there will be none. 26 Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumor upon rumor. They will try to get a vision from the prophet; the teaching of the law by the priest will be lost, as will the counsel of the elders. 27 The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with despair, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble. I will deal with them according to their conduct, and by their own standards I will judge them. Then they will know that I am the LORD."**

**NIV**