

The Siege of Jerusalem

And the Death of Ezekiel's Wife

- 1a** **24** In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, **the word of the LORD came to me:** ²“Son of man, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. ³And utter a parable to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord God:
“Set on the **pot**, set it on;
pour in water also;
⁴put in it the **pieces** of meat, all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder; fill it with choice **bones**.
- 1b** ⁶“**Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city**, to the **pot** whose corrosion is in it, and whose corrosion has not gone out of it! Take out of it **piece after piece**, without making any choice. ⁷For the blood she has shed is in her midst; she put it on the bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground to cover it with dust. ⁸To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have set on the bare rock the blood she has shed, that it may not be covered. **‏**
- 1c** ¹³On account of your unclean lewdness, because I would have cleansed you and
- ⁵Take the choicest one of the flock;
pile the **logs** under it;
boil it well;
seethe also its **bones** in it. **‏**
- ⁹**Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city!** I also will make the pile great. ¹⁰Heap on the **logs**, kindle the fire, **boil** the meat well, mix in the spices, and let the **bones** be burned up. ¹¹Then set it empty upon the coals, that it may become hot, and its copper may burn, that its uncleanness may be melted in it, its corrosion consumed. ¹²She has wearied herself with toil; its abundant corrosion does not go out of it. Into the fire with its corrosion!
¹⁴I am the LORD. I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it.

you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you.

2a ¹⁵The word of the LORD came to me:

¹⁶“Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.”

2b ²⁰Then I said to them, “The word of the

LORD came to me: ²¹‘Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul, and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. ²²And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. ²³Your turbans shall be on your heads and your shoes on your feet; you shall not mourn or weep, but you shall rot away in your iniquities and groan to one another.

²⁵“As for you, son of man, surely on the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their soul’s desire, and also their sons and daughters,

I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord GOD.” פ

¹⁸So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded. ¹⁹And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?”

²⁴Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign; according to all that he has done you shall do. When this comes, then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.’ ט

²⁶on that day a fugitive will come to you to report to you the news. ²⁷On that day your mouth will be opened to the fugitive, and you shall speak and be no longer mute. So you

will be a sign to them, and they
will know that I am the LORD.”

Ezekiel 24:1-27

Two Cities in Ezekiel’s Shadow

Augustine of Hippo was born in 354 AD in the small North African town of Thagaste (modern-day Algeria). Raised by a devout Christian mother, Monica, and a pagan father, Patricius, Augustine grew up both brilliant and restless—as he famously put it in his memoirs called *The Confessions*, “**You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you**” (*Confessions* 1.1).

He tells us in that book how as a young man he chased every philosophy and pleasure the Roman world had to offer. He had converted to Manichaeism, a kind of smorgasbord, dualistic, gnostic religion that demanded abstinence and fleeing worldly passions as evil. Yet, he was an ambitious career climber, teaching rhetoric as a professor in Carthage, Rome, and Milan and lived openly with **a faithful woman** for over a decade while he practiced this religion in hypocrisy. She became the mother of his son Adeodatus.

Augustine was always [searching for truth](#), and it seems, always [falling short](#). His life was that of intellectual fireworks and moral explosions.

Then, at age 31, everything changed. In a garden in Milan in 386 AD, he heard a child's voice say, "[Take up and read](#)." He opened [the Scriptures](#) to Romans 13 and was overwhelmed by God's grace. [He converted](#), was baptized by Ambrose in 387, and renounced his career, his planned marriage, and his old life. He retreated briefly to a villa near Milan for reflection, before returning to Africa. In 391 he was ordained as a priest in Hippo Regius (modern Annaba, Algeria), and by 395 he became bishop there — a role he held until his death in 430, during the Vandal siege of the city. Augustine became one of the great theologians in history, shaping Christian thought on grace, sin, the Trinity, predestination, and the nature of human history.

One of his most famous works, *The City of God*, was born out of the greatest shock of his lifetime. In 410 AD, the [Visigoths under Alaric sacked Rome](#). This was the unthinkable event. The Eternal City, the symbol of power and civilization for centuries, was violated. Pagans blamed Christianity: abandoning the old gods had provoked this disaster. Augus-

tine wrote *The City of God* to answer them. He was not trying to deny the horror of Rome's fall, but to reframe it. **Earthly cities rise and fall** under God's providence because they are built on pride and self-love, and when they collapse, it reveals their fragility and sin. Only the City of God — the eternal community of those who love Him — endures, and this is by God's grace and work alone.

I want to spend a moment on the City of God, because it is important for how I want to end this sermon. What Augustine means in his book by the phrase “City of God” is not a physical place or political institution, but **a spiritual community** that has existed side by side with **another spiritual community** since the beginning of history, which he also refers to as a city — the City of Man.

In *The City of God*, he describes the City of God as the invisible, eternal fellowship of everyone—past, present, and future—who love God above all else and live by grace through faith in Him. Its citizens are marked by humility, obedience to God's will, and longing for **the heavenly Jerusalem** (like Abraham who “**was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God;**” **Heb 11:10**). By contrast, the City of Man (or earthly city) consists of everyone whose deepest love is directed toward

self, power, pleasure, or created things rather than the Creator. **The two cities are intermingled in this age**, but are not to be confused—Cain and Abel, Babylon and heavenly Jerusalem, Rome and the church. They are distinguished by what (or whom) they worship. Augustine insists that every earthly city, no matter how glorious (Babylon, Rome, or even Jerusalem in Israel), is ultimately built on the love of self and therefore fragile and doomed to fall under God’s judgment or the passage of time. Only the City of God endures because it is grounded in the unchanging love and faithfulness of God Himself.

Augustine’s *City of God* **shares deep kinship with Jesus’ teaching** of the “kingdom of God,” which is also a present-yet-not-fully-consummated spiritual reality that transcends earthly power and calls for radical allegiance to Christ. Both emphasize that the true kingdom/city is “**not of this world**” (**John 18:36**), yet is already breaking in through grace, even as it awaits final vindication. There are other views of “church and state” that are helpful to compare with Augustine.

The Reformed “two-kingdoms” (R2K) doctrine, as taught at places like Westminster Seminary California, is perhaps the closest modern heir to Augustine. It distinguishes the spiritual kingdom (the church, governed by the

gospel) from the temporal kingdom (civil government, governed by natural law and reason), insisting that Christians live faithfully in both without conflating them. Augustine anticipates this by refusing to identify any earthly regime—even a Christian one—with the City of God. However, this model more sharply separates the church from the government than Augustine did, sometimes giving the impression that the gospel has little direct bearing on the secular state, nor natural law and reason on the life of the church.

By contrast, the medieval and early Reformation vision of “[Christendom](#)” sought a visible Christian society where church and state were united under Christian rulers, with the goal of a Christianized civilization. Augustine is both its ancestor (he defended suppressing the Donatists) and its sharpest critic, insisting no earthly order can ever be the City of God.

Modern evangelical ideas of a “[Christian nation](#)” (especially in the American context) are a profoundly mixed bag. Some reflect [a legitimate Puritan impulse](#) — which agreed with Augustine that no earthly city is the City of God, yet believed God holds all nations accountable under His sovereignty and sought to ground their new settlements in hum-

ble recognition of Him as Creator and Judge. I deeply sympathize with this view and **we will unpack more of it when Ezekiel shifts his gaze to the oracles against the nations.**

Others veer into what Augustine would call an **over-realized eschatology**, whether from the left (certain utopian visions that merge church and state under progressive ideals, i.e. communism, socialism, liberation theology, secularized social justice, etc.) or the right (expectations of near-total cultural transformation before Christ's return; i.e. post-mill theonomy, pre-mill Moral Majority, etc.). In Augustine's view, both effectively collapse the two cities into one. It is interesting that when Rome became officially Christian, Augustine refused to call it holy or eternal, warning that every earthly city remains fragile and prone to the love of self. For Augustine, the fall of any city—whether Rome or **Jerusalem**—is meant to shatter every false hope and turn the heart toward the only city that cannot fall: **the heavenly Jerusalem**, the City of God.

The fall of Rome was the collapse of the greatest civilization the world had known—a city of unparalleled wealth, laws, and monuments reduced to flames and blood. Augustine did not flinch from describing **the brutality**. In Book I,

he writes of the “slaughter, plundering, burning, and misery” that were the “normal aftermath of war” (I.7), yet notes the unprecedented mercy shown in Christian churches, where barbarians spared refugees who fled there. Elsewhere in the same book, he confronts the ungrateful survivors who fled to those sacred places: “Many are so inflamed with hatred against [the City of God] ... as to forget that they would now be unable to utter a single word to its prejudice, had they not found in its sacred places, as they fled from the enemy’s steel, that life in which they now boast themselves” (I.1). The “enemy’s steel” is the sword at the throat, the burning homes, the violated streets. It was real, yet Augustine insists [the calamity was no accident of fate](#), but part of a larger divine order.

In a different but strangely echoing way, Augustine knew what it was to have something infinitely precious torn away without the comfort of normal mourning. Years before Rome fell, ambition and [family pressure forced him to send away the woman he had loved faithfully for over a decade](#)—the mother of his son. In the *Confessions*, he confesses the agony: “[My concubine being torn from my side as a hindrance to my marriage](#) [family pressure had insisted he marry up and this woman was someone in that culture he

could never marry because of her status], **my heart which clave unto her was torn and wounded and bleeding**” (VI.15). She returned to Africa, vowing never to know another man, while Augustine, unable to wait for the socially arranged marriage that never happened, **took another partner because of his unbridled lust**. The wound did not heal cleanly; it “mortified,” leaving deep scars.

As we are about to see, there are perhaps more parallels with Ch. 24 of Ezekiel in these two stories of Augustine than perhaps any other famous Christian. Even with them though, **Augustine does not come close** to what God made the prophet Ezekiel go through. For he not only had to describe the initial assault on Jerusalem and its coming horrors, like Augustine, but God actually sovereignly caused his wife to die so that the prophet might personally enter into the brutal grief of the fall of his own civilization.

Ezekiel 24 in Context

As we come to Ezekiel 24, we reach **the summit** and conclusion of a carefully structured cycle that began back in chapter 12. The book has been building through a symmetrical pattern—a chiasm—that places chapter 24 as the mirror image of ch. 12.

- A. “Know That I Am the Lord” (12:15); Symbolic Acts of Exile (12:1–28)
- B. “Lying Divination” (13:6); False Prophecy Condemned (13:1–23)
- C. “Idols in Their Heart” (14:3); Idolatry Indicted (14:1–23)
- D. “Like a Vine” (15:2); Unfaithfulness Allegorized (15:1–8)
- E. “Played the Whore” (16:15); Adultery Allegorized (16:1–63)
- F. “Rebelled Against Him” (17:15); Rebellion Parabled (17:1–24)
- G. “Turn and Live” (18:32); Repentance Urged (18:1–32)
- F'. “Rebelled Against Me” (19:2); Leadership Lamented (19:1–14)
- D'. “Like a Vine” (21:10); Judgment Imaged (20:45–21:32)
- C'. “Made Your Idols” (22:3); Sins Indicted (22:1–31)
- B'. “Lying Divination” (22:28); False Prophecy Judged (22:23–31)
- E'. “Played the Whore” (23:5); Adultery Allegorized (23:1–49)
- A'. “Know That I Am the Lord” (24:27); Symbolic Acts of Judgment (24:1–27)¹

Both chapters open and close with the same key phrase: “you/they will know that I am the Lord” (12:15 and 24:27). This is what I have called the “drumbeat” of the entire series of oracles. In between, we’ve seen the themes pair up like a mirror: false prophecy in 13 meets judgment on false prophecy in 22–23; idolatry in 14 faces indictment in 22; the vine

¹ This is the first time I have shown E'. in its proper position in the book. Prior, I've shown it in its proper position *within the chiasm*. Having seen that the entire chiasm is itself a weave with all even chs. Being 3 columns and odds being 2, I believe we are now able to make sense of what happened. It was deliberate. If E'. were where it belongs (i.e. ch. 20), it would have needed to be a *three* column weave. But it is a *two* column weave. This in turn would have thrown the entire 3/2 pattern of the following chapters off. So placing it as ch. 23 continues the pattern properly. But this also creates a sense of limping or stumbling, like a qinah lament, for the E'. is now out of place near the end, precisely what happens in some qinah laments, with Lamentations being the prime example, as the first four chapters are all poetry, but the last is prose (marking a deliberate literary “breakdown” reflecting exhaustion and unresolved grief. This gives a heightened literary sense that the end is upon us. I think it is an ingenious way of writing this particular woven story. As we will see, a very similar thing now happens with ch. 24 also breaking the 3/2 pattern.

parable in 15 echoes judgment imagery in 21; the adultery allegory in 16 finds its counterpart in 23; rebellion in 17 parallels lament in 19; and the call to “turn and live” in 18 stands at the center as the heart of God’s desire.

In Ezek 24, we are going to see the conclusion of this. The symbolic acts of exile in chapter 12 answer symbolic acts of judgment in the fall of Jerusalem and the death of Ezekiel’s wife. Chapter 24 is therefore not just another oracle—it is the deliberate capstone of this whole section, bringing the message of judgment full circle and driving home the inescapable truth: God’s people will know Him through the fire of discipline.

We’ve noticed that each chapter has alternated in the way it was written. All even chapters have been triadic, almost dialectic, in their thesis, antithesis, synthesis or judgment of three column woven repetition. All odd chapters have been shorter binary, two-column structures of a kind of problem and response (or paired figured). Ch. 24, we would expect, would therefore return to the three. *It doesn’t*. It is clearly a two column weave, showing that the overall structure is now breaking, just like the walls of the city of Jerusalem, and might we wonder Ezekiel himself, are about to do.

Why would I say that? The chapter is divided into **two distinct stories**. First, Ezekiel presents a parable of a filthy **cooking pot** filled with choice meat (representing Jerusalem's corrupt leaders and people), boiled until scorched and unusable, symbolizing the city's complete destruction and uncleanness. Second, God announced the sudden **death of Ezekiel's wife**—the “**delight of his eyes**”—and forbade him to mourn outwardly, mirroring how the people would be stunned into silence and unable to mourn when the temple (their “delight”) was destroyed and their families slain. Can you even begin to imagine it? We've seen Ezekiel have to do some pretty crazy things already (play war games in a wall, lay on his side for months on end), but this seems above and almost beyond the pale. Let's get into it.

Row 1a (Ezek 24:1-5): The Parable of the Pot

The chapter opens with an **introductory four verses** that I've put into the left column. It gives us a date, “**In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me**” (**Ezek 24:1**). This translates into **January 15, 588 BC**. Ezekiel's ministry began in July 593 (**Ezek 1:1-3**), so this is 5 years and 6 months later. The

previous date we were given was **Ezek 20:1**, which translated into Aug 14, 591, or 3 years and 5 months. So a significant amount of time seems to have passed even since our previous chapter.

What was Ezekiel thinking as the Word of God did not come to him for a period of time that nearly amounts to **the time of Jesus' own ministry**? 3 ½ years of silence, a kind of famine of hearing the word of the Lord (**Amos 8:11-12**), awaiting the inevitable judgment upon Jerusalem that will inexplicably see Ezekiel endure his own great suffering vs. 3 ½ years of God speaking fully, personally, and publicly, which itself culminates in Jerusalem and God's judgment upon the suffering Servant. Do not let **that comparison** remain lost on you. I believe it is biblically-theologically rich and deliberate. For one is the OT son of man, the other is the NT Son of Man.

Thus it continues, "*Son of man...*" (**24:2a**). You think that title is coincidental to the same title Jesus had? No way. Ezekiel is a type of Christ and this chapter will show how in amazing ways (**death of city in both, death of bride in both**). "*Son of man, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day*" (**2**). So this day, **the very day the Word of God broke**

his silence to Ezekiel, marks the very moment Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem 1,000 miles away. What are the odds? They didn't have television, telephones, radio, or telegrams back then. How could the Word of God possibly know this? Because he is in both places simultaneously. Only God could do this.

He tell him to “utter a parable to the rebellious house” (3a). We've seen many parables in this part of Ezekiel already. What will this one be? “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Set on the pot, set it on; pour in water also; put in it the pieces of meat, all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder; fill it with choice bones’” (3b-4). Ezekiel is commanded to describe the act of preparing a cooking pot by filling it with water and loading it with the highest-quality meat and bones.

It continues in vs. 5, which I have in the right column, “Take the choicest one of the flock; pile the logs under it; boil it well; seethe also its bones in it.” The command (col 1) escalates the imagery (col 2): the pot is now filled with the finest meat, the fire is maximized, and the boiling is total. Everything is subjected to extreme heat until it is fully con-

sumed. Now remember, Ezekiel is to do this while the people in Babylon look on. It is a parable. They are supposed to try and figure it out.

Row 1b (24:6-12): Parable Explained

Thankfully, as you know me, we don't have to! **Vv. 6-8** pair up with the pot and meat (**3-4**). “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose corrosion is in it, and whose corrosion has not gone out of it!” (**24:6a**). We can see that the pot stands for **the bloody city**, and this is obviously Jerusalem, for this is what the entire Oholibah parable was teaching. Jerusalem is now corrosive. We will find out in **vs. 11** that this pot is actually **copper** (*nehoshet*), so this **rust or scum** refers to hard water/mineral deposits of calcium and lime scale or burnt-on grease and food that carbonizes and clings to the metal or the oxidation from repeated boiling. But this is a parable, not literal. This is the bloody city. So the corrosion is Jerusalem's sunken in, baked on, calcified *sins*!

He then starts to talk about **the pieces of meat**, “Take out of it piece after piece, without making any choice. For the blood she has shed is in her midst; she put it on the bare

rock; she did not pour it out on the ground to cover it with dust. To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have set on the bare rock the blood she has shed, that it may not be covered” (6b-8). The blood she has shed are those widows and orphans, the poor and the downtrodden of previous chapters. They are laid out on the rocks because the people have committed these acts and left the blood uncovered.

There is a command in **Leviticus** that relates to this. When Ezekiel says Jerusalem put the blood on the bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground and cover it with dust (vs. 7). He is directly alluding to the command in **Lev 17:13** that **blood must be poured out and covered with earth** to avoid defilement and to show respect for life. By leaving it uncovered on bare rock, the city has deliberately refused atonement and exposed its guilt before God. There is no atonement and no repentance. The meat represents the guilty people who shed that blood. Their sins are laid bare on the rocks.

Vv. 9-12 now **escalate** it (col 2) again by showing what God will do. Now, the logs and bones and boiling (vs. 5) match up. “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Woe to the bloody city! I also will make the pile great. Heap on the *logs*, kindle the fire, *boil* the meat well, mix in the spices, and let

the bones be *burned* up. Then set it empty upon the coals, that it may become hot, and its copper may burn, that its uncleanness may be melted in it, its corrosion consumed. She has wearied herself with toil; its abundant corrosion does not go out of it. Into the fire with its corrosion!”

Long ago, John Mayer gave the explanation, “The pot here spoken of was Jerusalem. The parts or pieces of flesh to be sodden away in it were the Jews, flocking here from all parts for the defense of the city. The bones were the stoutest and most expert warriors. The boiling of them all, that they might be consumed, intimated a long continued siege, and for this reason they should be wasted, some after, others by famine and pestilence. The fire made under with much wood served to set forth the Chaldean army, which was to them as this fire, and finally with fire burned down the city.”²

Row 1c (Ezek 24:13-14): The End of Jerusalem

That takes us to the third row of the first story—two verses. **The end of all things.** The first “**On account of your**

² Carl L. Beckwith, Timothy George, and Scott M. Manetsch, eds., *Ezekiel, Daniel: Old Testament*, vol. 12, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 132.

unclean lewdness, because I would have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you” (13). This gives the reason why the pot is so filthy. It is Jerusalem’s lewdness—the thing we saw in the previous chapter with Oholibah. The Lord says he would gladly have cleansed you, but you would not have it. You loved your recalcitrant filth and abomination. Therefore, you were not cleansed. Since you would not, you will not be cleansed again until I have spent my wrath on you.

Then vs. 14 continues God’s action in the right column with his final, irrevocable declaration. “I am the LORD. I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it. I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord GOD.” It is now too late, for the Babylonian is at the gates. And no one is going to send him away until he accomplishes its complete obliteration from the face of the earth.

Taylor says, “The appalling sufferings undergone by God’s people from 588 BC onwards, in the siege and in exile, were due to their unwillingness to allow God to deal with them much earlier on in their history of disobedience.

And now the sentence has been passed, the moment of execution has come.”³ Shall I describe for you how it went according to other places in the Scripture?

The siege of Jerusalem brought the long, hideous catalogue of covenant curses to pass: infants and babies fainting in the streets for lack of bread and wine, their mothers too weak to lift them (Lam 2:11–12); compassionate women boiling their own children and eating them in the desperation of famine (Lam 4:10; cf. Deut 28:53–57; Jer 19:9); young men and women raped in the streets of Zion and the towns of Judah, virgins defiled without pity (Lam 5:11); nobles whose bodies once glowed with health now blacker than soot, unrecognizable, their skin shriveled on their bones from starvation (Lam 4:7–8); the dead considered more fortunate than the living, who wasted away with hunger and thirst while the city gates sat empty (Lam 4:9; Lam 5:10); priests and elders dying unburied in the dust, their blood mingling with the blood of the young men slain by the sword (Lam 2:20–21); mothers in labor with no strength left to bring forth, their wombs empty of hope (Jer 15:9; Lam 1:20); the proud city’s children dashed in pieces before their parents’ eyes, its houses burned, its women ravished,

³ John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 177.

its old men shown no mercy (2 Chr 36:17); the sound of grinding millstones silenced, the voice of bridegroom and bride extinguished, the joy of the tambourine and harp stilled forever (Jer 25:10); corpses lying like dung on the open field, unburied, devoured by birds and beasts because no one remained to mourn or cover them (Jer 8:1–2; 16:4); the proud daughters of Zion stripped naked, their shame exposed to every passerby, their delicate feet calloused and bleeding (Isa 3:16–17; 47:2–3); the sanctuary itself defiled, its vessels carried off, its priests slaughtered beside the altar (2 Chr 36:18–19; Ps 79:1–3); and all of it, the famine, the sword, the rape, the cannibalism, the unburied dead, the silence of joy, declared to be the just recompense for blood shed on bare rock, for covenants broken, for a people who refused to be cleansed until fury was satisfied (Deut 28:49–57; Lev 26:29; Ezek 5:10; Jer 19:9).⁴

I do this not to be salacious or sensational, but because you need to feel the gravity of just how horrific this event was. When Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem, it changed everything. The Israelites were absolutely brutalized and sent off into captivity into another land, in fact eventually into all the

⁴ See the list of verses at the end of the sermon for exactly what God's word says.

lands of the surrounding nations—the fate of the chosen people scattered to the four winds. He **destroyed David's city**—the place where God said he would make his name to dwell. He **destroyed their temple**. No longer could they offer sacrifices or perform the worship commanded by God for them. Now, atonement was not only something they *wouldn't* have, it was something they *couldn't* have. Forgiveness according to strict Levitical law was now impossible.

We today have no idea what this did to these people. It absolutely wrecked them in every way possible. Their profound pride that nothing could ever happen to them because they were God's chosen living in God's city with God's temple and Presence ended abruptly and unceremoniously in the most horrific way possible. And it happened overnight.

Americans honestly have no idea what is it like when an invading army comes into their world and finally destroys everything. You know this because if we did, we would never applaud a calculated invasion meant to destroy us, nor condemn those trying to stop it. We would never cheer on pastors who tell us things we want to hear while slandering those who tell us what we need to hear. We are a people as disconnected from reality as Israel was. But suffer the actual

consequences of war and I promise, you will have a very different reaction to it all. Just ask Israel after it had time to think about what had happened to them.

Row 2a (15-19): The Unthinkable Death

This takes us to [the second story](#), for it is meant to show us just how deeply we all should contemplate what God did to his own people as he disciplined them for their sin.⁵ It is marked by the Word of the LORD coming to Ezekiel (15). “Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down” (16). This is a highly unexpected thing, not only to us the reader, but especially to the prophet. Now, Ezekiel has had to deliver God’s word to the people on many occasions, and sometimes he has even had to do some pretty bizarre things while doing it. Doing

⁵ As far as the weave goes, as we move into this, you may notice the columns seem to reverse: now the left side carries God’s direct command to Ezekiel, and the right side shows Ezekiel’s *obedience* and the people’s question. This reverses the disobedience of Israel (left) and action of God (right) previously. This isn’t a mistake—it’s the climax. In the first half, the pot was the sign, and God spoke about Israel. In the second half, Ezekiel himself becomes the sign, and God speaks to him directly. The judgment is no longer distant; it has come home to the prophet’s own life. The columns shift because the sign has shifted—from an object to a person, from a parable to a living grief. Yet the pattern holds: God acts (left), and the human response follows (right). Ezekiel’s silent suffering becomes the mirror the exiles must look into. Nevertheless, the left column remains the side of the recipient—Israel’s sin, Ezekiel’s command, the people’s loss. The right column is always the side of divine action—the fire, the declaration, the obedience, the recognition.

all these play-acts surely had an impact on him personally and emotionally. Imagine laying on your side for over a year! But now, somehow, the siege itself is going to touch him personally a world away from Jerusalem in Babylon.

What is this “**delight of your eyes?**” We don’t learn yet. What we learn is that whatever it is that is about to happen to him, he is **not allowed to mourn or weep** at all. **Vs. 17** reinforces it. “**Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.**” Ezekiel is a priest, and the command here echoes the commands given to priests in the Torah. They were not allowed to mourn for most relatives (**Lev 21:1-4, 10-12**). Is someone close to him about to die?

The **five things** mentioned that Ezekiel cannot do in **vs. 17** also have earlier precedent, especially for priests. (1) **Sighing** or noisy groaning is what you do at ritual lamentations at funerals (**Mark 5:38**). (2) The **turban** is the headdress of the priest. He would normally remove it and put dust and ashes on the head. He is not allowed to do that. (3) **Sandals** were often taken off in times of distress (**2Sam 15:30**). He can’t do that because someone might associate that with public mourning. (4) Covering **lips** was a veil you put on

during mourning. (5) Eating the **bread** of men refers to common bread, the mourner's funeral meal.⁶ Imagine being told this by the Lord. You are a priest. It wouldn't take long for you to realize that God was prophesying to you—someone close to you *is* about to die.

That's exactly what happens as we do to the right column, “**So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded**” (**Ezek 24:18**). He says it matter-of-factly. No emotion. No tears. No long story about her. We don't even learn her name. You think he wanted to do this? No. You think he did that in private? This is absolutely crushing. *She is the delight of his eyes!* He loved his wife with everything in him.

But this was not cruelty on God's part. This is **for the public** and sometimes the messenger himself must suffer with the people. “**And the people said to me, ‘Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?’**” (**19**). They had to have been beside themselves. His wife dies and he doesn't even care? Sure, he's a priest, but God allows for priests to mourn when their wife dies. What kind of heartless, cold, hardened man is this prophet of God?

⁶ See **Michael S. Heiser**, “[Naked Bible Podcast Transcript Episode 140: Ezekiel 24](#),” *Naked Bible Podcast* (Jan 7, 2017), 11.

Row 2b (20-24): The Delight of Your Eyes

The **second row** presents itself. Again, it is marked by the **Word of the LORD coming to Ezekiel (20)**. They want an answer. Give them an answer. “**Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul, and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword**” (21). The key idea here is that God is the one who will do this, not ultimately the Babylonian. He is but the tool. Now, remember, the day the pot oracle came was only the day Nebuchadnezzar *came to* Jerusalem. The sack will take months. It began Jan 15, 588 and would not conclude until 18 months later on July 18-19, 586 (**2Kgs 25:3-4; Jer 39:2**).

The key repeat here is the “**delight of your eyes.**” Ezekiel just lost his. Now the people of Babylon, taken into exile a dozen years earlier, are about to lose theirs. Perhaps they still had hope of seeing Solomon’s temple again one day. That will not happen. Perhaps they had hopes of seeing their relatives again. They will die by the sword.

God continues, “**And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. Your turbans shall be on your heads and your shoes on your feet; you**

shall not mourn or weep, but you shall rot away in your iniquities and groan to one another” (22-23). We’ve seen that even the exiles in Babylon have never really repented of their sins. And thus they will watch from afar as God heaps his wrath upon their “holy city” which has become a den of robbers.

Ezekiel is now a living sign to them. Vs. 24a, “Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign; according to all that he has done you shall do.” You will suffer what he has had to bear up under. They will do what he has done. “You wonder why I didn’t mourn my wife? Now you will find out. You will all lose everything close to you that you hoped you might return to. All you will have left is groaning to one another as you continue entrenched in your sin wondering why all this has happened,” Ezekiel is saying. But “wonder,” they will not have to do for long. For the drumbeat returns, “When this comes, then you will know that I am the Lord God” (24b). The Lord has spoken. It shall be done.

Row 2c (25-27): Glorious City No More

The very end now of our long oracles concludes. “As for you, son of man, surely on the day when I take from them

their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their soul's desire, and also their sons and daughters..." (25). Jerusalem, the holy city, will be no more. Their delight will become their disgust. Their joy will become misery. Their glory shall be defiled. Their stronghold shall be struck down. Their children shall be taken away.

"On that day a fugitive will come to you to report to you the news" (26). Remember, we have just seen that the Word of God is now speaking to Ezekiel. A fugitive will come to him. Amazingly, we will learn about this fugitive in **Ezek 33:21-22**, a man who clearly saw the fall of Jerusalem with his own eyes and then comes to Ezekiel on Jan 8, 585 BC, nearly two years after the pot parable was given to the prophet at the beginning of our chapter. "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion" (**Ps 137:1**).

Yet, at that time, finally, after years of having to stay silent publicly, saying only what God commands him, for he has been publicly mute since chapter 3 (**Ezek 3:26-27**), "On that day your mouth will be opened to the fugitive, and you shall speak and be no longer mute. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the Lord" (**24:27**). Ezekiel's burden will finally be lifted, but not before many more

chapters where he must transition from God's people to [the peoples of the nations](#), for all have sinned against God, not just them. For *all* must know, and all will know that our God, he alone is the Lord.

Conclusion

In the *City of God*, Augustine is reflecting on another city. He did not deny the slaughter, the burning, the rape, the plundering, or the psychological trauma (“[the bright light of the world was put out](#)”) of the sack of Rome. Instead, he insists [these horrors are not meaningless chaos](#) nor proof that the gods (or God) have abandoned the city. They are part of a providential order in which all earthly cities—all built on pride, injustice, and self-love—must eventually fall, so that people might see their fragility and turn toward the only City that cannot fall, the City of God.

Today we've spoken about Jerusalem. Jerusalem was about to fall, and fall it would. Because [Jerusalem](#) belongs properly to the City of Man. Yes, it was the place where God chose to make his Name, that is his Son, his Glory, and his reputation dwell. But it nevertheless is no holy city. It

was a defiled city, even as it remains to this day, after millennia of rebuilding, tearing down, times of wars and times of peace.

Many people today seem to almost worship this Jerusalem. As if she could do no wrong. They are confused and spiritually discombobulated as the Israelites of old. When the Scripture idealizes Jerusalem and sings of her glory—when God gave his people such wonders and pleasures through that city of man, he did so because he was pointing to a greater city, whose builder and foundations was God.

In the Bible, there are two Jerusalems, not one. One is a shadowy type of the other. Paul speaks about the shadow, the city of man as “Hagar,” “Mt. Sinai,” and “present Jerusalem” who “is in slavery with her children” (Gal 4:24). She is called Sodom and Egypt in Revelation 18:8. She is evil.

“But,” he says, “The Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother, for it is written, ‘Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband’ (25-27). This allegorically refers to Isaac, whose mother was Sarah, the mother of the promise and of the miracle.

Sarah and her husband Abraham believed God, and it was credited to them as righteousness. They trusted in the Word of God to give them a son when it was not possible. This son is heavenly Jerusalem. He came to us only in shadow in the OT, first through Isaac, then Jacob. They were, too, like the earthly city, were sinners and corrupt. But Jesus has tabernacled among us. He is the temple of God and the King of the City to which we by faith now belong. Jesus, amazingly, takes on the opposite of what happened to Ezekiel. Ezekiel predicts the death of Jerusalem and his wife dies. Jesus dies for Jerusalem and dies for his bride. For he is the greater Son of Man, and who can know the agony that he suffered for us?

The city of which he is King is [an incorruptible city](#). She is a city with spiritual foundations. She is a city of true holiness, righteousness, and knowledge. She is described in Revelation 21 as the bride of Christ. [“I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” \(Rev 21:2\)](#). She is the dwelling place of God with man (3). Where she is, God dwells in the midst of his people. In her, he wipes away every tear from the eyes, and death—even the death of a wife or a country—shall be no more, neither shall there be

mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (4).

She alone endures among all cities. And she endures even now, in the midst of the City of Man—though not confused with them. She is Christ’s church, his chosen people who are saved by faith alone through the overpowering, amazing grace of Christ Jesus and his atonement that takes away our sin.

The point of Ezek 12-23 with its climax in ch. 24’s fall of the city and death of a wife is just **so that you might ponder**, like the people of Israel, **what God has done and what he is doing.** Will you stay in Jerusalem that people worship today, a city known for and destroyed because of its evil? Or will you be lifted up through faith in Christ to Jerusalem that is from above—to the City and kingdom of God that Jesus causes all who bow their knee to him to enter through faith? Long for her and sing with the Psalmist, **“The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel” (Ps 147:2)**, **“Let the tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy!” (137:6).** **“Blessed be the LORD from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD” (135:21).**

Appendix:

The Horrors of Jerusalem's Destruction According to the OT

Here is a compiled list from each of the main references I cited in Jerusalem's fall, listed in the order they appeared. Absolutely brutal:

1. Lam 2:11–12: “My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out to the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because infants and babies faint in the streets of the city. They cry to their mothers, ‘Where is bread and wine?’ as they faint like a wounded man in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mothers’ bosom.”
2. Lam 4:10: “The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”
3. Deut 28:53–57: “And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you... The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother... and to the wife he embraces... so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating... The most tender and refined woman among you... will begrudge to the husband she embraces... her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns.”
4. Jer 19:9: “And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbor in the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them.”
5. Lam 5:11: “Women are raped in Zion, virgins in the towns of Judah.”

6. Lam 4:7–8: “Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their bodies were more ruddy than coral, the beauty of their form was like sapphire. Now their face is blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets; their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as a stick.”
7. Lam 4:9: “Those slain by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger; for these pine away, stricken for lack of the fruits of the field.”
8. Lam 5:10: “Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine.”
9. Lam 2:20–21: “Look, O Lord, and see! With whom have you dealt so? Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old; my young women and my young men have fallen by the sword; you have killed them in the day of your anger, slaughtering without pity.”
10. Jer 15:9: “She who bore seven has grown feeble; she has fainted away; her sun went down while it was yet day; she has been shamed and disgraced. And the rest of them I will give to the sword before their enemies, declares the Lord.”
11. Lam 1:20: “Look, O Lord, for I am in distress; my stomach churns; my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death.”
12. 2 Chr 36:17: “Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand.”
13. Jer 25:10: “Moreover I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.”
14. Jer 8:1–2: “At that time, declares the Lord, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the

- prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs. And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground.”
15. Jer 16:4: “They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.”
16. Isa 3:16–17: “The Lord said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet, therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts.”
17. Isa 47:2–3: “Take the millstones and grind flour, put off your veil, strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one.”
18. 2 Chr 36:18–19: “And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.”
19. Ps 79:1–3: “O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the heavens for food, the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.”
20. Deut 28:49–57: “The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation

whose language you do not understand... They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land... And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you... The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces and to her son and to her daughter her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns.”

21. Lev 26:29: “You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.”
22. Ezek 5:10: “Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers. And I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds.”

Bibliography

Augustine. *City of God*.

_____. *Confessions*.

Beckwith, Carl L.; George, Timothy; and Manetsch, Scott M. eds. *Ezekiel, Daniel: Old Testament*. Reformation Commentary on Scripture 12. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.

Mayer, John. *Commentary Upon All the Prophets*.

Block, Daniel Isaac. *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997.

Heiser, Michael S. “[Naked Bible Podcast Transcript Episode 140: Ezekiel 24](#).” *Naked Bible Podcast* (Jan 7, 2017).

Taylor, John B. *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 22. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969.