

Blind to the Sign

God's Judgment on a Rebellious House

12:1 The word of the Lord came to me:

² “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house.

³ As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight. You shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house.

⁴ You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile, and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who must go into exile.

⁵ In their sight dig through the wall, and bring your baggage out through it.

⁶ In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out at dusk. You shall cover your face that you may not see the land, for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.”

⁷ And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands. I brought out my baggage at dusk, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight.

8 In the morning the word of the Lord came to me:

⁹ “Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, ‘What are you doing?’

¹⁰ Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it.’

¹¹ Say, ‘I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them. They shall go into exile, into captivity.’

¹² And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder at dusk, and shall go out. They shall dig through the wall to bring him out through it. He shall cover his face, that he may not see the land with his eyes.

¹³ And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there.

¹⁴ And I will scatter toward every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops, and I will unsheathe the sword after them.

¹⁵ And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries.

¹⁶ But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the Lord.”

¹⁷ And **the word of the Lord came to me:**

¹⁸ “Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink water with trembling and with anxiety.

¹⁹ And say to the people of the land, Thus says the Lord God concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink water in dismay. In this way her land will be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it.

²⁰ And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

²¹ And **the word of the Lord came to me:**

²² “Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, ‘The days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing’?

²³ Tell them therefore, ‘Thus says the Lord God: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.’ But say to them, The days are near, and the fulfillment of every vision.

²⁴ For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.

²⁵ For I am the Lord; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord God.”

²⁶ And **the word of the Lord came to me:**

²⁷ “Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, ‘The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.’

²⁸ Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord God.”

(Ezekiel 12:1-28)

Zip Code Man

You are an [out of town visitor](#) to Boulder. It is a comfortable Friday evening in late summer and the friends you are staying with suggest you all go over to the [Pearl Street Mall](#) to catch the sights and sounds and get a true taste of this wild city. As you are walking down the mall, a crowd seems to be gathering on the corner of 13th and Pearl, in the open space in front of the Wells Fargo building, caddy corner to the Courthouse.

You see a man who is putting his juggling pins into his bag and now pulls out a very long white [chain](#). He asks people to please give him some space as he throws the chain down, hooked at the ends, and begins silently pulling on it here and pushing on it there. Very soon, it makes the rough outline of the United States.

In front of all the people, he then asks [if anyone is from out of town](#). Several people raise their hands, but instead of telling him where they are from, he asks for their zip code. One person, two, then three, four.

“Anyone else?” he asks.

You shyly raise your hand and give him your [zip code](#). Suddenly, he takes the first person and positions them somewhere over what looks like northern California. The next person he puts somewhere over Alabama. Someone else goes to the middle of Colorado. Then someone over in NY. Finally, he puts you in Northern Minnesota.

He then starts to tell everyone a story. The first person he says, came here from [San Francisco](#). He gives a famous tourist attraction and names a famous building that they had just come from. This person, he says, making up the story as he goes along, came to [Glenwood Springs](#), where they met their friend (he asks for a name), Susan, who lives near the hot springs that Doc Holiday bathed in during his last years to stave off the effects of tuberculosis. He keeps adding to the story, first with a person from [Rochester](#), then someone who came from [Mobile](#). Each time he names some totally obscure building or landmark or interesting fact about your town, no matter how small or obscure. Finally, he comes to you. He

tells you that you are from [Thief River Falls](#), MN and proudly gives you more facts about the city. Everyone is stunned. How could he possibly know all of this. But you smirk to yourself knowing that he missed your town by 15 miles. You are actually from Viking, MN. *Got him!*¹

Such is the life of perhaps the most interesting [busker](#) I've ever seen perform a live show. For thirty years the Zip Code Man has been performing and adding to his routine, and last I saw he had every zip code in Canada, Mexico, Europe, and Australia also memorized. And it's been a few years, so who knows what he's able to do now.

Today, we are going to look at [the first busker](#)—perhaps better known as a street performer. And this busker [also has zip codes in mind](#). But rather than tell you where you are from as you give him your zip code, this one is going to tell you which zip code you are *going to* ... if you survive long enough to get there. For this busker is not performing his street plays for entertainment. This is no Friday Night stroll on Pearl Street Mall. It is a deadly serious engagement with the people whom Ezekiel the prophet has been called to act out the coming disaster so that the people might finally listen and believe the Lord their God.

¹ Zip Code man actually did an interview back in 2012. See [David Rosdeitcher](#), "[Oral History Interview with David Rosdeitcher, 2012 A](#)," *Boulder Library* (2012).

Ezekiel 12: An Overview

Our passage is [Ezekiel 12](#). It comes at the beginning of a 13 chapter section that is centered on the people's desperate need to turn from their sin and live.

- 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)
- E'. "Played the Whore" (23:5) Adultery Allegorized (23:1–49)
- 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)
- A'. "Know That I Am the Lord" (24:27) Symbolic Acts of Judgment (24:1–27)

It is the first part of the [judgment oracles](#) aimed at Judah and Jerusalem in particular. In it, as we saw in previous chapters, Ezekiel is to carry out a series of sign-acts in front of the people. He acts like a street performer, but his goal is not to entertain. Through strange acts, apocalyptic imagery, and polemical discourse, the prophet will warn the people of the impending judgment that they have stubbornly been denying is coming, though God had repeatedly told them and

even already foreshadowed in two prior invasions that saw some Israelites, including their king and priests like Ezekiel, be led off into captivity into Babylon.

The structure of the chapter is divided neatly into **five sections** that each begin with “**the word of the Lord came to me**” (**12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26**), with the second adding that He comes “**in the morning**.” The chapter may be *theologically chiasmic*, beginning with Israel’s rebellion, moving to a sign act that symbolizes the coming exile, centering on the explanation of the act that princes and people alike will go into exile, with a remnant spared so that they can confess God’s justice. It moves out with another sign act symbolizing the anxiety and desolation of the land, God countering a false proverb and declaring that judgment is immanent, and God affirming his prophecy to the rebellious house.

A: Israel’s Rebellion (12:1-2)

B: Symbolic Act of Exile (12:3-7)

C: Explanation of Exile’s Judgment (12:8-16)

C': Explanation of Land’s Desolation (12:17-20)

B': Refutation of Delayed Judgment (12:21-28)

A': God’s Word Against Rebellion (12:25-28)²

Aside from the curious acts that Ezekiel will perform, this chapter is **a master-class** lesson for us of some of the most

² There are several mini-chiasms in Ezekiel 12. See “[Ezekiel](#),” *Biblical Chiasm Exchange*.

basic theological ideas we can ponder: *Human rebellion* in the midst of God's covenant(s) that demand accountability, *God's sovereignty* and faithfulness, and *God's certain judgment*. In light of the events of this past week that are all heavy on our hearts, especially the unthinkable assassination of Charlie Kirk, and the profound blindness, evil, and deception it is uncovering in our culture, this chapter is profoundly relevant. We will look at all of these as we go through the chapter, showing how each one has a NT application, and ending with a remarkable and very well-known allusion to this chapter that comes in 2 Peter that gives us a particularly relevant application for our own day.

God's Certain Judgment

It begins, “The word of the LORD came to me” (1). This isn't some random thought that comes into the prophet's head. It is not the “words of the LORD.” It is the *word* of the LORD. This is the Son of God—the Angel who covenanted with Abram, Isaac, and Jacob. He comes to Ezekiel in Babylon. He comes with a command.

“Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to

hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house” (2). This language originates in Isaiah 6, 150 years earlier, where God told Isaiah, “For the heart of this people has become callous, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed” (Isa 6:10). Nothing has changed in the intervening years. If anything, the Israelites have only become more hardened, more blind, more rebellious, as we will see in some shocking ways in later chapters. It’s also worth mentioning that Jesus says in Matthew 13:13-15 that the reason he speaks to them in parables is because in seeing they do not see and in hearing they do not hear or understand. There’s nothing new under the sun.

I say this because while Ezekiel is going to give a parable in Ch. 17, which mirrors Jesus. But for today, he is going to be commanded to perform a sign-act and in a lot of ways, it’s a like a living embodied parable. So what does the Word tell the prophet? It takes place in five stages. First, “As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile’s baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight. You shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house” (Ezek 12:3). The act mimics someone suddenly being forced to

leave their home, and all they have time to do is grab a couple of shirts, and some socks and toiletries that they throw into the bag and don't even have time to zip shut properly. He is to do this **in the full sight of the people during the day** so everyone can see. Then he quickly scurries from one place to the other, perhaps going from his front yard to his back yard. Apparently, he is not to use any words and the idea is to see if they might actually “get it” even though they are rebellious. But do you think they will, even though he is doing to the people already in exile in Babylon?

Second, “**You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile**” (4). **That same day**, while everyone watches, Ezekiel hauls out his packed bag like a guy fleeing a country.

Third, “**... and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who must go into exile. In their sight dig through the wall, and bring your baggage out through it**” (4b-5). In the evening, Ezekiel **digs a hole** through the wall of his house using just his hands.

Fourth, “**In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out at dusk**” (6). At dusk, he shoulders his bag and sneaks out through the hole he dug, vanishing from their site.

Fifth, as he does this, “You shall cover your face that you may not see the land, for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel” (6b). Ezekiel covers his face so he can’t see the ground beneath his feet, showing he’ll stumble blindly in the dark.

As you can see, these are all very specific instructions and I want you to notice, as Daniel Block says, the “juxtaposing [of] words like ‘eyes,’ ‘seeing,’ ‘daylight,’ and ‘darkness,’ [as] the account presents a fascinating study in perception and blindness.”³ Tuck that thought away for now. Importantly, we learn next that Ezekiel did exactly as he was commanded. He did not veer to the right or the left. He did not add or subtract. “And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands. I brought out my baggage at dusk, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight” (7). He carried out the instructions to the letter.

So what’s going on here? Thankfully, we have vv. 8-16 which explain. These come to us in the form of the second visitation of the Word of the LORD to Ezekiel. “In the morning the word of the LORD came to me” (8). There is

³ Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 365.

no delay. Now is not the time for further postponement of judgment. God is deadly serious on the urgency of all this. Ezekiel heard the command. He carried it out that day and evening. The next day the Word returns to him. What will he say this time?

First, he **asks him a question**. “**Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, ‘What are you doing?’**” (9). This is an acknowledgment that the people have seen, but also that what was said in **vs. 3 has not come to pass**. They have *not* understood—*because* they are a rebellious house! And this is those who have already gone into exile! How much more those still in Jerusalem? This means that **their sin has blinded them to truth**. Blindness is therefore not primarily a problem of reason, but of *morality*. The reason people can’t understand is not because they are stupid, but *evil*. Sin forces you to not see reality rightly, because if you did, you would be forced to repent and humble yourself and admit you were wrong. And when people are living in such a state, this is the last thing they want to do.

But this is **the spiritual condition of humanity**, not just Israel. It is blindness. It is deafness. It is rebellion. Romans 3, citing a litany of passages from the OT puts it most suc-

cinctly. “No one is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:10-18). From head (throat, tongues, lips, mouth) to toe (feet), apart from Christ we are sinful. Sinful as serpents, poisonous, harmful, devilish. Notice how **no one understands** *because no one is righteous*. If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, then what does that mean about those who do not fear the Lord? Well, Paul just told you. Calvin put it this way, “**Stubbornness is the fountain of their blindness and deafness.**”

But God needs to the people to understand at least with their minds, even if their hearts don't follow, so now the prophet **gets to use words**. “Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it’” (10). This “prince” refers to **Zedekiah**. Originally named Mattaniah, he was the last king of Judah (597–586 BC), installed as puppet king to rule over

a weakened Judah by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon after his nephew Jehoiachin was deposed and exiled with Ezekiel. He was the third son of King Josiah. Despite warnings from the prophet Jeremiah, **Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, leading** to Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC, only a handful of years from now, to his sons' execution, his blinding, and his imprisonment in Babylon until his death. What a horror, all because he refused to listen to God and repent.

We actually read about Ezekiel's street drama **in Jeremiah** after the real events occurred a handful of years from now. "In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city. Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate ... When Zedekiah king of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled, *going out of the city at night* by way of the king's garden through the gate *between the two walls*; and they went toward the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, at Riblah, in the land of Hamath; and he passed sentence on him. The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah

at Riblah before his eyes, and the king of Babylon slaughtered all the nobles of Judah. He put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains to take him to Babylon” (Jer 39:2-7).

Here you can see even more why there was all that playing of language juxtaposing eyes and seeing and daylight and darkness. It isn't just a study in perception and blindness, it is a play on the physical blindness that was coming to Zedekiah for his spiritual blindness thinking he could escape in the dead of night. The physical realm is mirroring the spiritual. Amazingly, this is now exactly what Ezekiel is going to predict before it ever happens.

“Say, ‘I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them. They shall go into exile, into captivity’” (Ezek 12:11). The prophet himself becomes a sign! In his case, it is an ominous sign, a portend of what is coming. They are going into exile and into captivity—the prince and all the people who have not yet been taken into Babylon. Recall something we've discussed several times and this idea deeply embedded in the minds of these people that they were God's chosen and that nothing bad would ever happen to them. Even if something bad happened to a wave or two of cap-

tives, those who remained still kidded themselves that judgment was not coming *for them*. That's why God left them behind. They were the good batch! It is truly remarkable how pride and bad theology lead to such darkness.

So the Word tells Ezekiel, “*And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder at dusk, and shall go out. They shall dig through the wall to bring him out through it. He shall cover his face, that he may not see the land with his eyes*” (12). You see? This was no street performance for entertainment. This was *real life being enacted before the fact*. Only a God who knows the future could have told Ezekiel to do these things. But it is more than just knowing the future. For you see, God is himself *sovereign over the future*. He orchestrates it!

“*And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there*” (13). This *isn't an accident*. It isn't a random event that is coming. God is spreading his net over Zedekiah. God is coming after him. God is trapping him. God is ensnaring him. These are precisely the kinds of things too many Christians flee from hearing, seeing, or believing in our day; yet it is absolutely vital in every way. *You must see God as he is, not as you wish that he*

was. You must see that he hates sin. You must see that he punishes sin. You must see that it is inevitable and inescapable.

But not only does God ensnare the king. It gets worse. “I will scatter toward every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops, and I will unsheathe the sword after them” (14). This is a prediction of the death of his own sons, sons of David, those few left who could be king of Jerusalem. It doesn’t say *the Babylonian* will scatter them. It says *God will*. God is the source behind this. If God didn’t get the Babylonian permission, there would have been no invasion, just like there hadn’t even been one since the day of David in Judah. This is the doctrine of God’s sovereignty showing up front and center. This the is the doctrine we talk about in our confession,

God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree. (LBC 3.1)

The doctrine teaches that **God is the first cause** of everything that comes to pass. Yet, he uses responsible agents to carry out his will, such that they may do it with evil intent, while for God, there is no evil in anything he does.

And why is God doing this? **Generally speaking**, what Joseph said is always true, “**As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good**” (**Gen 50:20**). Or as Romans 8 says, “God works all things for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” It doesn’t say all things are good. It says God works all things for good. Not for everyone. For those called by him. In Joseph’s case, it was **the saving of many lives** in the days of a famine and setting the stage for the Exodus hundreds of years later. But here, the “good” has a different outcome, and this is very important to see.

“**And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries**” (**15**). The reason is explicit and has to do with what we’ve already seen has not yet happened through the street performance. Thus far they **haven’t understood**, and it’s been because of their continual persistent sin. But now, once they actually are scattered among the nations, then **they shall know that he is Yahweh**. He is the God who covenanted with

them. He is the God who carrying out the curses of their violation of breaking that covenant. It is he and he alone against whom they have sinned. And it is he and he alone who is carrying out justice upon them.

All so that they *will* know. This is the good here. The verb *yada* is in the perfect tense, and it is called a prophetic perfect. This is not a hope. This is not a wish. This is a demonstrable necessary outcome of the captivity. They will come to know Yahweh through the very judgments they face. He is God and there is no other. This is the same general word we get for God setting his love upon Israel—he knows them (**Amos 3:2**). It is not foreknowledge, but intimate personal knowledge.⁴

But we get one small taste here of a great kindness that God is not only doing this **to demonstrate his righteousness** and to cause them to know his **justice**. God’s nature of holiness and justice is never divorced from other attributes such as **mercy** and **grace**. “**But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the Lord**” (**16**). Here, then, it is

⁴ For more, see **James Montgomery Boice**, *Romans: The Reign of Grace*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 921.

God's kindness in not utterly wiping all the people out, which is what all sinners deserve. But God will let some survive the sword. They will not die. Nor will they suffer famine and pestilence in a siege that caused some to even eat their own children. This is the doctrine of the remnant again, a doctrine that in the NT comes to symbolize Christians.

But God's mercy here must also be seen for the reason it is shown. It is **not merely an end to itself**, although God is love and God is merciful and that *could* be enough. But he keeps some of them alive *so that they might know through the living through it that he is the LORD*. He has told them all this ahead of time precisely **so that they might believe when it comes to pass**. Otherwise, what would be the point? This prophecy is going to be used by God later to bring them to salvation.

For it doesn't stop there. God says that **they will declare their own sins to the nations** into which they are being scattered. When they go off into captivity or perhaps even escape it by fleeing to another land, which some Jews did, they would know why this all happened and they would tell the Gentiles: It is because we have sinned against God that this has happened to us. We did this to ourselves. We are to

blame, not him. It was out abominations. Our rebellion. We deserved it and **God let us live** to tell you about it so that *you* might know that he is the LORD. This will have ramifications many chapters from now when God sends the prophet to deliver many oracles against those very nations themselves, for even this is part of a much bigger plan to hold the entire world accountable for their rebellion and eventually, to do something greater about it.

From Street Performer to Proverb Destroyer

This takes us through the first half of the chapter, which will now begin to enfold back upon itself, but not with pure parallels. Rather, it is theological parallels that take place through some very different ideas than we've just seen. First up, we come to **the third occurrence** of "**The word of the LORD came to me...**" (17). So what is the Word going to say to the prophet this time?

It is **a second street performance**. "**Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink water with trembling and with anxiety**" (18). Adding this to the first performance, this kind of reminds me of the haste in which the people ate the **Passover** meal, for in the morning, they would flee Egypt in

haste. But there was no quaking or trembling in that eating. There was no anxiety, more like anticipation. Quaking, trembling, and anxiety are reserved for colossal judgment that is coming. Terror. Horror. Panic. That's what the siege of Babylon would be most about for those living inside the walls of Jerusalem.

Indeed, **Jerusalem** is the target. “**And say to the people of the land, Thus says the Lord God concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink water in dismay. In this way her land will be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it**” (19). It is difficult to put into words what **a siege** entails and the horrors it brings to the people inside. Starvation, disease, slow death, cannibalism. And that's *before* the enemy finally gets into the city where they dash little children against rocks—as the Psalm puts it. This is what is coming, and God is telling the people to prepare. It is going to be absolutely brutal. And nothing can stop what's coming.

He describes more in the next verse. “**And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the Lord**” (20). Do you

hear the repetition of why it is happening? This time knowing that he is the LORD is tied directly to the horrors of the siege and accompanying battle. This is coming with all of its ferocity and cruelty, *so that you will know* that he is Yahweh. Oh, church! We must wake up to the God, the Word, the living Christ who came to Ezekiel and what he is able to do to people who sin against him. For **he hates sin**, especially in the midst of his own people. And he doesn't just hate it. He punishes it. Revelation 2-3 makes that abundantly clear. He takes our lampstands away and gives us over to our own desires. And then comes the end not merely for them, but for a civilization.

In **vs. 21**, for **fourth time**, “**The word of the LORD came to me.**” I wish the ESV would capitalize “Word” here! For this is **not the Scripture** coming to Ezekiel. It is the Angelic Divine Warrior who is very angry—the Jesus no one wants to talk about. Why is Christ coming to Ezekiel this time?

“**Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, ‘The days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing?’**” Why do we create proverbs? Think of **Benjamin Franklin’s**, “**Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,**” or “**A penny saved is a penny earned.**” The point of those proverbs is to be pithy

sayings that will teach you wisdom. Or how about **George Washington's**, "If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter," or **Thomas Jefferson's** "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." These proverbs help memorably warn people of the dangers of political tyranny so that they might learn and remember.

So what about **Judah's proverb**? Why did Israel create it? Certainly not to warn. Clearly not to be wise! They were telling themselves, through a proverb that everyone repeated just like those of Franklin, that **God isn't going to do anything to them**. *Those loud-mouthed prophets have been saying these things for decades, even centuries. Nothing ever happens.* In doing this, the people were literally using God's longsuffering to turn around and slap him on the face with it. To take advantage of such grace as came because God didn't bring the judgment but forestalled it by causing the people not only to doubt God's prophets and Word, but to then encourage them through it to continue sinning? Can you think of anything more offensive?

Thus, as we've seen already, the Word first speaks a truth and then he talks about its fulfillment. "**Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord God: I will put an end to this**

proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.’ But say to them, The days are near, and the fulfillment of every vision” (23). God has had it with their lies and deceptions, their perversions and doubts about his covenant faithfulness to their covenant infidelity. He had promised them in the days of Moses what would happen. He had forestalled final judgment, but no longer. All the words of the prophets long written down will now find their fulfillment.

He directly targets the false lying prophets in Judah. “For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel” (24). In Jeremiah we read these forked-tongued liars saying, “You will not see the sword nor suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place” (Jer 14:13), and again, “It shall be well with you, and no calamity shall come upon you” (23:17), and even in our next chapter in Ezekiel we hear them saying, “There is peace for Jerusalem!” (Ezek 13:16).

Summing it up we learn that this happens, “For I am the Lord; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord God” (12:25). Again, God’s sovereignty rises like cream to the top of our thoughts. God does exactly what

he says. He is no dead god. He is no pathetic god. He is no weak god. He is no forgetful god. He is no handcuffed god. His delay in such things is never to be taken as powerlessness, **but mercy and kindness**. As it says in Romans, “**Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?**” (**Rom 2:4**). **That’s why Christ hasn’t returned yet**, but more on that in a moment.

For **a fifth time**, “**The Word of the LORD came to me...**” (**Ezek 12:26**). In his final appearance, the Lord says, “**Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, ‘The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off’**” (**27**). This is very similar to the proverb. Some were saying that God’s visions never amount to anything. But others were saying, “**No, he is God and he will do it, just not now. That’s for another generation to worry about.**” But the Word tells Ezekiel, “**Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord God**” (**28**). He reiterates what was just said. The **duplication** reinforces it to our minds. The judgment is not going to be delayed. The people have rebelled for too long. God is coming. The lion is roaring. And

he is hungry for justice. The Divine Warrior is angry, and his sword will soon drip with the blood of his people.

The Sign, Social Justice, and the Gospel

As we think about this chapter, three thoughts come to my mind. First, **the sign**. Ezekiel served as a sign to the king that judgment was coming. So how are we today living in 2025 in America to apply such a thing to ourselves? I suggest that the only sure-fire biblical way is by understanding that Ezekiel as a sign was a type of a greater sign to come. It is only here that you can have any hope in the face of such terrifying vengeance and justice.

Jesus called **his own death and resurrection a sign**, meaning that he himself was a sign to the people. He said that a wicked generation asks for a sign, but no sign would be given them except **the sign of Jonah**. “**For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation**” (**Luke 11:30**). That sign was a sign that judgment was coming unless the people repent.

But beloved, whereas Ezekiel’s sign was an inevitable judgment that fell upon people who could no longer escape it, the sign *of Jonah* Jesus has in mind was a sign of God’s

judgment that fell upon *the Son of Man*! “Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will *the Son of Man* be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40). Why was Jesus three days and nights in the heart of the earth? Because he died. And why did he die? Because God judged the consequences of your sins in his body. Jesus died taking the wrath of God upon himself for what you have done. God’s justice and mercy kiss on the cross.

I said earlier that God must punish sin. And that is precisely what has happened in Christ. What became of Zedekiah is what Jesus willingly took on himself for you, so that you might not have to suffer such judgment if you will believe that God loves you that much that he would give Christ for you like this. How is this something that anyone could rationally disagree with and reject? I know many *do*, but never *rationally*. Only someone stuck in the throes of their own sin that they love or simply oblivious to it would reject it. Thankfully, the Law is the power to overcome the latter, in that it tells you’re your true condition, while the Gospel is the power to overcome the former in that through it, God literally calls people out of their sin by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Do you hear him calling you?

Come to Christ and he will forgive you, for God's wrath has already fallen upon his head.

Second, must address [the events of this past week](#). We live in a nation celebrating murderers, blaming victims, reveling in Charlie Kirk's assassination, calling for more, all while denying these things are evil and downplaying their happening. This powder keg is fueled by sin. Not the sin of the woke-mind virus shaming people for systemic sins they didn't commit, but actual personal sin that contradicts basic biology and God's objective transcendent moral order for humanity ([Ps 119:160](#)). Our only hope is the church awakening to sinners in the hands of an angry God ([Ezek 12:20](#)). He hates our sin. And he only forestalls judgment because of his kindness.

[Charlie Kirk was assassinated](#) for one reason. He stood up as a heretic before the Progressive Religious Orthodoxy, a false religion guised in Christianese, and spoke truth. [Any dissent](#) from central religious orthodoxy is by definition heresy. Progressive Orthodoxy (whatever you want to label it) is the religion that murdered Charlie—both the secular and “Christian” versions of it. One pulled the trigger. The other is an accomplice. J. Gresham Machen dealt with this 100 years ago in the Mainline saying, “[The great redemptive](#)

religion which has always been known as Christianity is battling against a totally diverse type of religious belief, which is only the more destructive of the Christian faith because it makes use of traditional Christian terminology ... It is no mere ‘heresy’ ... but a different religion” altogether.⁵ All we are seeing today is the Evangelical perversion of the same thing.

This **different religion** necessitates conformity to a progressive ideology *for salvation* (be that the “salvation” of living in the Progressive Utopia or “heaven”). You have an alternative political answer to the Leftist’s political laws, social programs, or policies? You are by presupposition a racist, a homophobe, a dangerous violent fascist threat to “democracy.” There was nothing *actually* racist, homophobic, or anything else in Charlie’s words, and I’ve seen plenty of supposed videos claiming the opposite. But when it contradicts the Orthodoxy, *it must be*. It can be no other way. There is no debating it. It simply is. Now “**burn her because she’s a witch.**”

This is a religion *not of faith alone by grace alone in Christ alone*, but of a *social* gospel—a deep confusion of the law and gospel if there ever was one. Only the new social gospel is

⁵ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Monergism reprint, 1923), 1, 136, 5.

even more perverted than the one of 100 years ago as the depths of the depravity has no bottom. What they believe about their policies and “outcomes” and “equity,” *are* to them, *the gospel*. This is their good news. Therefore, by definition, when someone disagrees or presents an alternative or contrary way of thinking about it, it must be, by definition, heresy, because *it runs contrary to the gospel*. And perhaps the scariest part of it all to me is the blindness that forces this religion to passive-aggressively project all of its own hatred upon the heretics while it pats itself on the back for how moral it is.

We must recover truth in the biblical Gospel, and stop being ashamed of it, for it is only in the sign of Jonah, in the death of Jesus for us apart from our works and by faith alone that people can find the will to change, for only in the good news does God change our wills and hearts to receive his law. Any “Gospel and...” any works righteousness, any law-additions pervert and dilute God’s free grace, destroying its potency. Until this happens in Christ’s church, there will be no revival, there will be no Reformation, where will be no change. *But. I believe it is happening* and that the wind of the Spirit is blowing in fresh new ways even as the enemy grows angrier. And Charlie’s murder is proof of it. The fight is real,

and we must pray that truths like we find in Ezekiel will find their way back into our culture. It is the warning of Ezekiel.

Finally, I cannot conclude without showing you that it is not just the First Coming that we must keep in mind. We confess that Christ is coming again “**to judge the living and the dead.**” Whatever this means, it must take the totality of God’s justice, holiness, mercy, and grace together. Nevertheless, it is going to happen.

Peter says something directly about this. He tells the church that he is writing to them **to stir them up by way of reminder** about the prophetic predictions of the *Second Coming*. He notices that “**scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation’**” (**2Pet 3:2-4**). Sound familiar? That is Judah’s proverb!

It isn’t that Peter is directly quoting Ezekiel, but it is a shared motif common to humans who disregard the Word of God.⁶ And it means that the judgment that came upon Jerusalem is **a type of Second Coming of Jesus Christ**. After all,

⁶ The connection first struck me watching the short video on Ezekiel 12, **John Sevenenson**, “**Old Testament Prophets: Ezekiel 12. Drama of a Present Captivity**,” *YouTube* (Sept 12, 2020).

the Second Coming is *Jesus* coming, and the Jerusalem siege was *Jesus* who was trapping Israel in his net! This needs to be something that urges you remember that though it might seem like it will never happen, Christ will return and it could be at any moment,--today or a thousand years from now.

For Peter tells us, *that one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as one day to God (8). And therefore, the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness.* Do not allow your view of the world and its darkness, nor your longing for Christ to return when he hasn't yet to cause you to ironically stop believing that he is coming again. And I mean believing with your emotions, your thoughts, your view of the world.

The world is not out of control. Jesus knows what's going on. He is actually sovereign over it. And he is coming to again in judgment. Make sure you end up in the right zip code and look to Christ alone. He forestalls judgment precisely so that people today might still repent and find forgiveness and life abundant in Christ. It is his mercy. It is his kindness. It is his longsuffering. It is his grace. The same that he gave to the remnant that didn't die in the siege or suffer disease or famine. And why? *So that people might know that God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the LORD.*

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