Ezekiel & the Sovereignty of God
Part 4. The Sovereignty & Judgment of God
## Dating Ezekiel

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Jerusalem Walls Breached 29 July 587 BC

Ezekiel & the Sovereignty of God
syncretism

[sing-kri-tiz-uh m, sin-]

Word Origin

noun
1. the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion.

2. Grammar. the merging, as by historical change in a language, of two or more categories in a specified environment into one, as, in nonstandard English, the use of was with both singular and plural subjects, while in standard English was is used with singular subjects (except for you in the second person singular) and were with plural subjects.
Another stylistic characteristic is the formulaic expressions Ezekiel used, some of which are unique to him and others shared with other prophets. Ezekiel usually referred to Yahweh as 'adonay yhwh, "the Lord Yahweh" (217 times). *This title emphasized* Yahweh's authority as His people's divine master.

The name by which Yahweh addressed the prophet (93 times) is consistently *ben 'adam*, "son of man"; *He never used* Ezekiel's personal name. This title, *ben 'adam*, *appears only in Ezekiel and in Daniel 8:17, which Ezekiel 2:1 may have influenced.* This title stresses the prophet's humanity and the distance between God and the human.

Ezekiel's favorite title for the Israelites (in the former Northern Kingdom, in Jerusalem, or in exile) is *bet yisra'el*, "house (or family) of Israel" (83 times or 57 percent of its 146 uses in the Old Testament). This title expresses the solidarity of the Israelites.

Notes on Ezekiel, 2015 Edition

Dr. Thomas L. Constable
sovereignty

[ssov-rin-tee, suhv-]

Examples  Word Origin

noun, plural sovereignties.
1. the quality or state of being sovereign, or of having supreme power or authority.

2. the status, dominion, power, or authority of a sovereign; royal rank or position; royalty.

3. supreme and independent power or authority in government as possessed or claimed by a state or community.

4. rightful status, independence, or prerogative.

5. a sovereign or independent state, community, or political unit.

Ezekiel & the Sovereignty of God
Ezekiel & the Sovereignty of God
Judah’s Captivity Symbolized

12 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.”
YAHWEH'S REPLY TO THE INVALID HOPES OF THE ISRAELITES 
CHS. 12-19

The exiles had not grasped the serious consequences of Ezekiel's warnings. They still hoped for an early return to Palestine, for they viewed the continued preservation of Jerusalem and Judah as signs of security.

Ezekiel patiently, systematically, and adamantly (cf. 3:8-9) challenged the naive reasoning of the exiles, undermining each source of their optimistic rejection to his warnings of judgment. When Ezekiel had finished his challenges, no excuses remained.
YAHWEH'S REPLY TO THE INVALID HOPES OF THE ISRAELITES
CHS. 12-19

The purpose of the Chapters 12-19 is to show the worthlessness of this false confidence, and to affirm the certainty and irresistibility of the predicted destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, in the hope of awakening the rebellious and hardened generation to that thorough repentance, without which it was impossible that peace and prosperity could ever be enjoyed.
YAHWEH'S REPLY TO THE INVALID HOPES OF THE ISRAELITES
CHS. 12-19

The Judahites had trusted in the remnant in Jerusalem (12:1-20), parables (12:21-28), other prophets (ch. 13), idols (14:1-11), religious intercessors (14:12-23), their position as God's vine (ch. 15), the holy city of Jerusalem (ch. 16), Zedekiah (ch. 17), and God's justice (ch. 18).
Ezekiel 12:7

Ezekiel did all that the Lord had commanded him. During the day he assembled the few things that a person would take into exile and bound them up for carrying. That evening he dug a hole through his wall with his hands. As night fell, he went out through the hole in the wall as the people watched. Zedekiah and many other Jerusalemites tried to escape from the city at night (Jer. 52:7). The fact that Ezekiel went out at night may also represent the dark conditions that would exist for Israel when the final exiles departed from Jerusalem.
Zedekiah
“Righteousness of Jehovah.” The last king of Judah. He was the brother of Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:31; 24:17, 18). His original name was Mattaniah; but when Nebuchadnezzar placed him on the throne as the successor to Jehoiachin he changed his name to Zedekiah. The prophet Jeremiah was his counsellor, yet "he did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 24:19, 20; Jer. 52:2, 3). He ascended the throne at the age of twenty-one years. The kingdom was at that time tributary to Nebuchadnezzar; but, despite the strong remonstrances of Jeremiah and others, as well as the example of Jehoiachin, he threw off the yoke of Babylon, and entered into an alliance with Hophra, king of Egypt. This brought up Nebuchadnezzar, "with all his host" (2 King 25:1), against Jerusalem. During this siege, which lasted about eighteen months, "every worst woe befell the devoted city, which drank the cup of God's fury to the dregs" (2 Kings 25:3; Lam. 4:4, 5, 10). The City was plundered and laid in ruins. Zedekiah and his followers, attempting to escape, were made captive and taken to Riblah. There, after seeing his own children put to death, his own eyes were put out, and, being loaded with chains, he was carried captive (B.C. 588) to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-7; 2 Chr. 36:12; Jer. 32:4,5; 34:2, 3; 39:1-7; 52:4-11; Ezek. 12:12), where he remained a prisoner, how long is unknown, to the day of his death. After the fall of Jerusalem, Nebuzaraddan was sent to carry out its complete destruction. The city was razed to the ground. Only a small number of vinedressers and husbandmen were permitted to remain in the land (Jer. 52:16). Gedaliah, with a Chaldean guard stationed at Mizpah, ruled over Judah (2 Kings 25:22, 24; Jer. 40:1, 2, 5, 6).
Ezekiel 12:10

Ezekiel was to explain to them that the oracle that he had delivered by his acted parable concerned King Zedekiah and the Jews who were in Jerusalem. Ezekiel regarded King Jehoiachin as the legitimate king of Judah, and he referred to Zedekiah as only a prince (Heb. nasi’, leader), because Nebuchadnezzar had set him on the throne. "Prince," however, was one of Ezekiel’s titles for Judah’s kings (cf. v. 12; 21:10, 12). Many of the Jews and the Babylonians also continued to view Jehoiachin as the true king of Judah.
Ezekiel 12:13

Nevertheless the Lord would snare Zedekiah like a bird in a net and would bring him to Babylon. Ancient art pictured deities as hunting and snaring their enemies. Yet Zedekiah would not see the land of Babylon even though he would die there (cf. 2 Kings 25:5, 7; Jer. 39:6-7; 52:8, 10-11).
Ezekiel 12:13

Josephus wrote that Zedekiah heard about this prophecy by Ezekiel but did not believe it because it seemed to contradict Jeremiah's prophecy about what would happen to him. This apparent contradiction was the reason Zedekiah gave for rejecting both prophecies. Both prophecies proved true: the Chaldeans took Zedekiah to Babylon, but he never saw the country because Nebuchadnezzar blinded him at Riblah.
See Book X, Chapters 7 & 8 of Antiquities of the Jews for Josephus’ description of Zedekiah and Ezekiel’s Prophecy.
Ezekiel & the Sovereignty of God

Zedekiah’s Cave
Zedekiah's Cave

The legend that the cave was a hiding place of King Zedekiah (a Judean king of the 6th century BC) dates back to at least the 11th century AD. At that time, Biblical commentator Rashi wrote that Zedekiah tried to escape from the troops sent by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar to besiege Jerusalem. (The story was also repeated in the next century by the commentator Radak.) According to Rashi: “There was a cave from the palace of Zedekiah to the plain of Jericho and he fled through the cave.” He added that God sent a buck running along the surface on top of the cave as Zedekiah was walking down below. The soldiers chased the buck and arrived at the exit of the cave just as Zedekiah was coming out, enabling them to capture and blind him. Thus was born the legend and name of “Zedekiah's Cave”.
Tanakh
(The Hebrew Bible)

Mishnah
(One of the first collections of rabbinical commentaries on the Tanakh. 200 AD)

Midrash
(Exegesis of Torah texts along with homiletic stories)

Talmud
(The Mishnah and the Gemara)

Gemara
(Rabbinical analysis of and commentary on the Mishnah)
Ezekiel 12:21-24

The Lord asked Ezekiel about a proverb that the Jews were reciting among themselves. They were saying that the days were long and that every vision failed. They meant that the captivity that the true prophets (including Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) had predicted was a long way off and that the visions they claimed to have would turn out to be unreliable. ...
Ezekiel 12:21-24

... The Lord promised that the people would no longer say such things because He would prove them wrong. Ezekiel was to contradict this proverb and give the people another one that the days of the coming captivity were not far off and that the prophets' visions would come to pass.
Ezekiel 13

The Prophet Ezekiel has already pronounced the judgment of God on the City of Jerusalem, the princes and the king. Now he rebukes the false prophets. . . . This chapter, one of the most important in the Old Testament on the abuses of the phenomenon of prophecy, may be considered an elaboration of the truth in 12:24 (i.e. that there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel).
Ezekiel 13:8-9

The Lord told these false prophets that He opposed them for what they had done. He would act against them by removing them from positions of influence among His people, depriving them of the rights of citizenship in Israel (cf. Ezra 2:62; Luke 10:20; Rev. 3:5; 20:15), and preventing them from returning to the Promised Land. They had failed as "watchmen" over the house of Israel (cf. 3:16-21).
Ezekiel 13:15-16

The Lord would destroy both the people’s homes, or the false vision of the future that these prophets painted, as well as the prophets themselves, those who promised peace to Jerusalem when no peace was coming (cf. Matt. 18:7).

"It is a common failing for preachers to want to speak pleasing and appeasing words to their people, but if they are to be true to their calling they must be sure to receive and to impart nothing but God's clear word, irrespective of the consequences. When church leaders encourage their people in sub-Christian standards or unbiblical ways they make themselves doubly guilty."

Ezekiel 13:17-18

The Lord also directed Ezekiel to speak judgment to the female false prophets who were concocting their own messages and passing them off as divine revelations (cf. Isa. 3:16-4:1; 32:9-13; Amos 4:1-3; Mic. 3:5).

He was to announce Yahweh’s judgment on women ‘prophets’ who sewed cloth bands to place on the wrists and floor-length veils on the heads of themselves or the objects of their “prophesying.” They used these aids to impress people and to cast spells on (to influence) people to bring them under their power (cf. Jer. 7:18; 44:17, 19).
Ezekiel 13:19-23

Ezekiel was to announce judgment on those who indulged in these occult practices and perverted justice. These women had been willing to put some to death who did not deserve to die and to save others from death who did deserve to die. The Lord promised to oppose their practice of using magic bands to hunt down innocent lives. He would tear these bands from their arms and release the people that these false prophetesses had snared like birds. He would also tear off the veils they used to hunt the innocent and free those whom they had hunted down. They would die. The Lord would deliver His people from their deadly hands, and they would know that He is the Lord.
Idolatry was the standard method of religion in ancient times. Ancient peoples believed that any depiction of a thing somehow partook of the essence of that thing, no matter how crude or artificial the depiction might be. A picture of a tree contained part of the essence of the tree; a statue of a god contained part of the essence of that god. Where that statue was, the god was of necessity at least partly present. Anything offered to a god’s statue was offered directly to the god.
Ezekiel 14:3

The Lord revealed to His servant that these elders (along with the elders in Jerusalem, cf. 8:7-12) had been nursing idolatry in their hearts. The word translated "idols" in this passage is *gillulim*, Ezekiel's favorite term for idols. It means pellets of dung, literally (cf. 6:4-6, 9, 13; et al.). These elders had put right in front of them the very thing that caused them to stumble in sin.
Ezekiel 14:7-8

Anyone in Israel, including immigrants (Heb. ger, sojourners, resident aliens), who did not repent but continued to do what these elders had done and approached a false prophet for a message would receive judgment from the Lord. Note the emphasis on personal responsibility for sin throughout this passage (cf. v. 4). The Lord would oppose all such people making them object lessons to others of what happens when God’s people pursue idolatry. He would put them to death (cf. Lev. 17:4, 10, 14; et al.). Then His people would know that He is God.
Ezekiel 14:12-14

God revealed that Jerusalem’s great sins had made deliverance from divine punishment impossible. Evidently some of the exiled Jews were remembering God’s promise to Abraham that He would deliver Sodom if there were enough righteous people in it (Gen. 18:22-33). Surely, they thought, there were enough righteous people in Jerusalem that God would not destroy it. ...
Ezekiel 14:12-14

... When sin had gone so far that Yahweh stretched out His hand in severe judgment by famine, even the righteousness of a Noah, a Daniel, and a Job could not save the nation.

"This attitude is nothing less than using the saints as an insurance policy to cover the sinners. It has been a human failing in every generation."

Taylor, p. 128
TITLE AND WRITER

The title of this book comes from its writer, Ezekiel, the son of Buzi (1:3). “Ezekiel” means “God strengthens (or hardens)” or “God will strengthen (harden)” or “May God strengthen (harden).” The name “Hezekiah” is similar, meaning “May Yahweh strengthen.”

“It expresses the prayerful wish of his parents that God would care for the newborn child by endowing him with strength, so that he could face life’s vicissitudes with confidence.”

The Lord strengthened Ezekiel in the face of cynicism and rejection by his fellow Jews. His name appears in only two verses (1:3; 24:24). His hometown is unknown, and no other biblical writer referred to him.

Ezekiel was a Judean priest of Yahweh as well as His prophet, as were Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1), Zechariah (Zech. 1:1), and John the Baptist (Luke 1:5). Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah were the only writing prophets who were also priests, and they all ministered during or after the Babylonian exile. Like Jeremiah, there is no evidence that Ezekiel ever served as a priest in the Jerusalem temple. Ezekiel’s priestly background may account for his interest in priestly things that his book reflects: the actions of the priests in Jerusalem, the Jerusalem temple, the glory of the Lord, and the future temple yet to be built. It probably also explains Ezekiel’s familiarity with things connected with priestly ministry, such as chazanim. His wife died during the course of his ministry (24:2, 15-18). Ezekiel’s life outside this book, so we have no information about when, where, or how he died.

Ezekiel & the Sovereignty of God

Study Notes
Constable’s Notes on Ezekiel
Questions?

“I don’t have any answers. I’m a non-prophet.”