

Ezekiel Chapter 17

Verses 1-21

This is the allegory of the two eagles and the vine used to show the futility of the nation's dependence on foreign powers.

The first eagle, Nebuchadnezzar, had gone to Lebanon, which represented Jerusalem.

Though he took the highest branch of the cedar (verse 3, meaning that he took the king and nobles into captivity (597 B.C.), yet he left the seed of the land (verse 5), or a remnant.

They in turn appealed to another great eagle (in verse 7), which was Egypt.

This description refers to Zedekiah's vain attempt to get military assistance from Egypt.

This alliance forced Nebuchadnezzar to return later to Jerusalem and destroy it.

Ezekiel 17:1-2 "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying," "Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;"

We see a break from the last prophecy in this.

"Riddle", in the verse above, means puzzle.

We know that Jesus spoke in parables, so that the unbelieving world would not understand.

Matthew 13:13 "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

This parable to the house of Israel is similar to the parables Jesus told.

He would relate a story to them that contained a deep spiritual message.

The world would not understand, because parables must be understood by the spirit.

God must reveal to us what they are saying, or we will not know.

They would hear with their ears, but might not understand in their hearts.

Ezekiel 17:3 "And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:"

The great eagle in this parable, is speaking of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

This highest branch of the cedar is speaking of the king of Judah.

We know that Jehoiachin was captured and taken back to Babylon.

The "eagle" symbolizes God, but in this particular instance, Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument God used to bring judgment on His people.

The many colors show that they were not all under one flag.

Many countries were fighting with Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:4 "He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants."

The land of traffic was Babylon.

The twigs cropped off could have been the princes that he took with Jehoiachin (in 597 B.C.).

The city of merchants is Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:5-6 "He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed [it] by great waters, [and] set it [as] a willow tree." "And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs."

“Seed”:

Those whom Babylon left in Judah (in 597 B.C.), who could prosper as a tributary to the conqueror, turned toward him.

“A spreading vine”:

Refers to Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed king in Judah.

The benevolent attitude of Nebuchadnezzar helped Zedekiah to prosper, and if he had remained faithful to his pledge to Nebuchadnezzar, Judah would have continued as a tributary kingdom.

Instead, he began courting help from Egypt, which Jeremiah protested.

Ezekiel 17:7 "There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation."

This "other great eagle", here, is speaking of the Pharaoh of Egypt, Hophra.

We see in this, that Zedekiah turned their loyalty toward Egypt.

He forgot who had put him in power.

He had betrayed Nebuchadnezzar.

This just means that Zedekiah did not want to be ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, and he sought help from Egypt.

Ezekiel 17:8 "It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine."

Judah was a fruitful prosperous land.

They could have brought forth many branches.

They could have produced greatly, had the judgment of God not been upon them.

Ezekiel 17:9 "Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof."

The downfall of Zedekiah and his sons would be soon.

God is opposed to his people making a treaty with the world (Egypt).

You remember, this kingdom headed by Zedekiah had not been very strong.

It had first reached out to Nebuchadnezzar, and then to Pharaoh for help.

It will be no great task for Nebuchadnezzar to destroy them.

Zedekiah will be uprooted as king.

He was so weak; it was an easy overthrow.

In fact, his sons are killed before him, and his eyes put out, before he is carried captive to Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:10 "Yea, behold, [being] planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew."

The east wind is a wind of great power.

It is usually spoken of as an ill wind.

When this wind comes, the crops are destroyed.

The dependence on Egypt would fail, and Judah would wither as the East wind, (a picture of Babylon), blasted her.

Verses 11-21

"Taken an oath of him":

The parable is explained in detail.

Babylon made Zedekiah a vassal subject to her, took captives, and left Judah weak.

Zedekiah broke the agreement in which he swore by the LORD to submit to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:13), and sought Egypt's help.

Thus he was taken to Babylon to live out his life.

Egypt was to be no help to him or any protector of his army.

Ezekiel 17:11-12 "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying," "Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these [things mean]? tell [them], Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;"

There is a break in the parable here.

Just as Jesus explained some of the parables he gave to His disciples, God will explain the parable here, to the rebellious house of Israel.

We see that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has captured Jehoiachin and the princes with him, and taken them to Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:13 "And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:"

The king's seed is speaking of Zedekiah.

Nebuchadnezzar put Mattaniah in power instead of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah).

He put him in power, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

The covenant was between Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar.

The king of Babylon had captured the mighty in the land, and carried them captive to Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:14 "That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, [but] that by keeping of his covenant it might stand."

This is saying, the king of Babylon captured the strong, who might have opposed Zedekiah, and took them to Babylon.

This kingdom would be subject to Babylon.

It would not be an independent country, but would be allowed to stand, as long as it was subject to Babylon.

Zedekiah had made an agreement with Nebuchadnezzar to be subject to him.

Ezekiel 17:15 "But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such [things]? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?"

Zedekiah rebels against Nebuchadnezzar.

He breaks the covenant and seeks help from Egypt.

Of course, he will not prosper in this.

He will not escape.

He will lose his sons and his eyesight, because of this betrayal.

Ezekiel 17:16 "[As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place [where] the king [dwelleth] that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, [even] with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die."

Zedekiah will be carried to Babylon blind, and will die in Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:17 "Neither shall Pharaoh with [his] mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons:"

Pharaoh had a mighty army, but nothing to compare with Nebuchadnezzar's.

Pharaoh will not fight Nebuchadnezzar at this time for Zedekiah.

Ezekiel 17:18 "Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these [things], he shall not escape."

God has no respect for those who shake hands on a matter, and then break the covenant.

He will not overlook this sin of Zedekiah.

Zedekiah was just power crazy, when he decided not to keep this covenant.

The worst part of all is that Nebuchadnezzar was acting as an agent of God in all of this.

Zedekiah then, would be disobeying God in this.

Ezekiel 17:19 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; [As] I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head."

We see in this, that God regards this covenant as His covenant.

He had sworn this before God, and it is very dangerous to break it.

God will greatly punish Zedekiah for this.

Ezekiel 17:20 "And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me."

This is just saying Zedekiah will be captured, and taken to Babylon.

Ezekiel 17:21 "And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken [it]."

This is speaking of the large numbers, who will be killed by the sword.

Those scattered are those who are taken captives.

There will be no question left that this is a judgment of the LORD upon these people.

Verses 22-23

One of the highest branches.

This is messianic prophecy stating that God will provide the Messiah from the royal line of David (the highest cedar), and establish Him in His kingdom like a mountain.

He will be "a high branch" reigning in the height of success.

"Branch" is a name for Messiah.

Messiah will be "a tender one" growing into a "majestic cedar".

Under His kingdom rule, all nations will be blessed, and Israel restored.

Ezekiel 17:22 "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set [it]; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant [it] upon a high mountain and eminent:"

This is a prophecy of the coming of Messiah.

He is truly the highest Branch.

He is the true heir of David to the throne.

The Branch that God plants is of the tribe of Judah.

The high mountain is the holy hill of God.

"Eminent":

Means elevated.

He is exalted above all.

The tender twig mentioned is Jesus.

Ezekiel 17:23 "In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell."

This is speaking of Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus was born in a manger in obscurity, but grew to be King of the Jews at His crucifixion, and King of all at His second coming.

The "boughs" and the fruit speak of His followers.

We are safe in the shadow of His Branch.

He is our protector and very present help.

Christianity began with Jesus, then His apostles, and now has spread into the millions.

He is a very fruitful Tree.

Ezekiel 17:24 "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done [it]."

In this, the "high tree" is the physical house of Israel.

The "low tree" represents the Spiritual house of Israel, who was known as Gentiles.

The green tree was physical Israel in their prosperous times.

The dry tree again, is the world which knew not God, until Jesus brought salvation to them.

It is God who brings down the lofty, and elevates the lowly.

This prophecy which began by pronouncing the disaster in Judah, and the captivity, and death of its people, now springs forth with hope for all mankind.

Salvation in Jesus Christ is offered to all mankind.

In fact, it is offered to whosoever will.

Jesus is the Tree of Life.

He is the Vine, and we are the Branches: See John 15:5: Our power lies in the strength of Jesus.

Ezekiel Chapter 17 Questions

1. What does verse 2 say this chapter is?
2. What does the word "riddle" mean?
3. Who is this parable spoken to?
4. Why would the world not understand?
5. The "great eagle" in this parable is speaking of whom?
6. Who is the highest branch of the cedar speaking of?
7. Who does the "eagle" generally speak of?
8. What do the "many colors" tell us?
9. Where was the "land of traffic"?
10. Who did Nebuchadnezzar set up as king over Judah?
11. What did it mean about the branches turning toward him?
12. Who did the "other great eagle" symbolize?

13. Who did Zedekiah betray?
14. God is opposed to His people making a treaty with the _____.
15. What happens to Zedekiah and his sons?
16. Where does the interpretation of the parable begin?
17. Who does He explain the parable to?
18. Who is the king's seed in verse 13?
19. What is another name for Jehoiachin?
20. Why were the mighty men carried to Babylon captive?
21. Where will Zedekiah die?
22. How does God feel about those who shake hands on an agreement and then do not keep it?
23. Whose covenant does God regard this covenant as?
24. Which verse begins a prophecy of Messiah?
25. What does "eminent" mean?
26. Who are the "boughs" in verse 23?
27. Who is the "high tree"?
28. Who does the "low tree" represent?