

Ezekiel 12

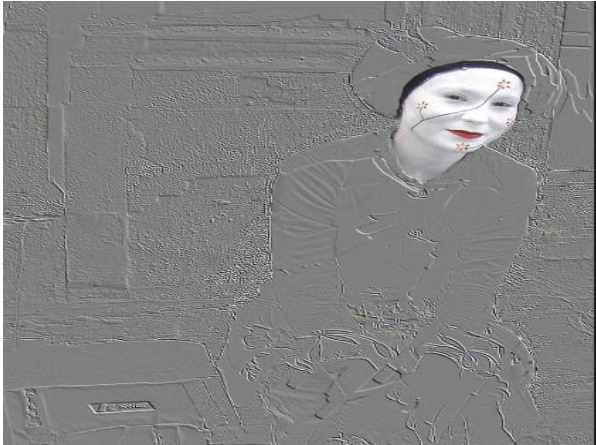
Back to The Future

The more spiritual books of the Bible tend to jump back and forth in time. Part of being a prophet often includes some spiritual time travel. Ezekiel has been on a spiritual journey to Jerusalem, while still living in Babylon. God is omnipresent; so, he is in both places. Now we jump backwards in time.

Chapter 12 is written back when Ezekiel was still back in Jerusalem. Chapters 12-24 were written during a timeline through the capture of Daniel and the Kings court (first Babylonian wave). It continues until King Zedekiah tried to escape. Chapter 24 is the chapter where the Babylonians start to put their siegeworks up for their second and more brutal invasion of Jerusalem. Chapters 25-35 are condemnations for the nations cheering as Babylon squeezes Jerusalem. Chapter 33 is the day that the second breach of Jerusalem by Babylon came flooding through. Ezekiel seems to almost be in a trance as his city falls the second time. Chapters 34-39 involve God taking Ezekiel on Spiritual journeys around the prophetically significant sites in Israel. Chapter 40 was when Ezekiel was grabbed and taken to Babylon. The final chapters seem to be from Ezekiel's journey to Babylon. Chapters 41-48 are about the future state of Israel and the final temple in Jerusalem.

Read Ezekiel 12:1-16: This chapter could have been chapter one, when God initially tells Ezekiel to go out around Jerusalem and tell his people that they are about to be captured. This is really the beginning of the story. It is pretty similar to Jeremiah's writings.

People develop selective hearing. The Jews are not listening to any genuine prophets, so God tells Ezekiel to use visual imagery to leave a lasting impression. People don't want to hear criticism or re-direction; but street acting is always good to gather a crowd. They would never forget the performance. It is like a *flash mob* moment. Perhaps even more like mimes such as Shields and Yarnell. You can hear 1,000 sermons and forget many of them...but you would never forget a street mime. Ezekiel sets out to act out what King Zedekiah was about to do. Ezekiel will act out the upcoming escape attempt of King Zedekiah in the night. He will pack his bags and crawl through the wall.



Ezekiel must dumb down his message, since his people have rejected God's word for so long. It is indirect, but it will get the point across. The Jews can hardly hear God anymore; as they have become purposefully estranged from him. The more we reject God; the more elementary God's message must become.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. (Romans 8)

We lose our ability to understand spiritual things as we walk away from God.

...the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2)

The natural man can only understand the things he sees. Parables and other bridges have to be created to even broach these spiritual concepts.

¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” ¹¹ He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.” ¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;’ ¹⁵ For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.’ ¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; ¹⁷ for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Matthew 13)

In High School, I started studying scripture seriously. Raised in the Lutheran Church, I knew many Bible stories conceptually, but meditating on scripture was a different experience altogether. I recall becoming aware that I needed to dive into the Word of God every day. I sat at the desk in my bedroom sweating and forcing myself to keep reading chapters that seemed to be rote history with insignificant details, leading to predictable outcomes. On one hand I hated it; and on the other hand, I knew enough to realize that this was proof that my mind was far away from God. Things started to break free and make sense and link together. I knew the joy of spending time in the Word would come if I hung in there. I was determined to *fake it until I could make it*. I began to get glimpses as to what God was saying and seeing deeper meanings. It got better and better.

Beware that this estrangement from God can even come back to believers as we set our Bibles down. We are too weak to keep up our zeal for God and maintain spiritual awareness without constant reloading. We are like leaky buckets. We have to move forward, because we are always sliding backwards.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Galatians 5)

Uphill Slide

Once you turn your back on God you get really lost, really quick. Willful avoidance of God's call is worse than ignorance. Most people that peel off from the LORD are typically just not in the word daily. The Jews got off of the *Yellow Brick Road*. I have had friends in Bible studies who have fallen back into the world of drug abuse. One observation that I have, is that these folks typically do not follow a chapter-by-chapter bible study format continuously. That is the best way to regain daily strength. They might get excited about bible trivia or secret codes, but not so much for the fundamentals. They might go completely down *the rabbit hole* to research it. It is normally *way off topic*. I think that part of it is that they want to teach something to the group that nobody else knows. Being a teacher appeals to them more than studying the Word. You cannot gain strength by *majoring in the minors*. We are not supposed to be chasing squirrels. We do not get the added detail and spiritual downloads if we are not responding to what we have already been given.



God is always coaching us to gain strength and move forward. The Christian faith is a road that narrows and begins to become steeper. It may not be that life is harder; as much as we see things more accurately. We become increasingly aware of our faults, and intellectual honesty becomes more vivid. We are not spared hardships. We are given tools to better cope and work through bigger and bigger challenges.

God is not going to pile on the visions and gifts of the Spirit and new truths if we are just doing our own thing. We must work through each tool and challenge that God presents us with. procrastination kills. In other words, we stay somewhat ignorant to more spiritual truth if we just coast and ignore the internal promptings of the Holy Spirit. If we procrastinate too long, we become spiritually stale. The more we know, the more we are accountable for. Jerusalem had seen and heard it all.

Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. (Matthew 11)

The Blind Leading the Blind

During Ezekiel’s mime act in downtown Jerusalem, he also put a blindfold on, after he dug through the city wall. Why? He is portraying their king. King Zedekiah would be permanently blinded after the Babylonians captured him outside the city gates. His soldiers would be chased to the ends of the country and killed.

Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war fled at night by way of the gate between two walls, which was by the king’s garden, even though the Chaldeans were still encamped all around against the city. And the king went by way of the plain. ⁵But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him. ⁶So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. ⁷Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon. (2 Kings 25)

Read Ezekiel 12:17-26:

I Don’t Deserve This Predicament

Why would this faithful man (Ezekiel) have to experience all of this unnecessary destruction and pain? He did not do anything wrong. We are not placed here to retreat to the Garden of Eden while Rome burns. We are salt on decaying carcasses. We are light in the utter darkness. We are pointing to stability in God during the crisis. We are here to stabilize a failing people. We are to be living contrasts to the pop culture. We cannot reach those who are perishing if we are living like separated monks. Jonah was not interested in saving anyone until he was in the same boat.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2)

We need to share our neighbor's struggles and predicaments to be able to help them. We too need to be saddled with the results of sinful world to have compassion on our neighbors. People do not need Monks, Pharisees or cloistered believers.

The people were saying over and over that no prophecies were being fulfilled. In other words, they did not believe that judgement was coming. It may have been a form of mocking God. That is ridiculous. Babylon has already been taking action. The Babylonians took Daniel and much of the king's court already. Jeremiah has been talking about the Babylonians for a long time. Now God is going to drop the hammer. The people are inadvertently begging him to keep his promise. There is no need to accuse a guilty conscience.