

## Ezekiel 24

**Read Ezekiel 24:1- 8:** This chapter is about God disinfecting Jerusalem and bringing it to a boil. There is some infectious sin that is festering. Life there had gotten out of control. God told everyone to leave before the fire, famine, sword and disease hit. They were kicked off of his property for not living within his prescribed rules. The Jews had become horrible people, who were fully given over to the pagan culture. This was all predicted before they even re-entered Canaan.

*<sup>16</sup> And the LORD said to Moses: “Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. <sup>17</sup> Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’ <sup>18</sup> And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods. (Deuteronomy 31)*

This day is exactly what Moses had warned them about. God sent the Babylonians to empty out and burn the city. The people who refused to surrender to the Babylonians, were going to become part of this boiling stew of men. They refused to leave; so, he will turn up the heat until they die.



Dates can be important as we study scripture. This was written on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin's captivity. Jehoiachin went to Babylon in the first wave of Babylonian sieges. The 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month is a lesser Hebrew fast day called Asarah B' Tevet, which commemorates the beginning of

the Babylonian sieges. God made sure that this all got written down on this particular day.

God used a lot of show-and-tell demonstrations. They could not read a newspaper, since most people (85-90%) were illiterate. God used the familiar things of everyday life to make his point. God tells Ezekiel to start cooking some meat soup. He tells him to use the thigh and shoulder meat. God is comparing Jerusalem to this meat soup that is being prepared. God told the Jews to go with the Babylonians, but those who remained would become the soup. Things are heating up quickly. The second siege will come in with the sword, fire and starvation and disease. If they do not leave voluntarily, their corpses will be pulled out one by one. There will even be some cannibalism that breaks out as they get starved out.

*“See, O LORD, and consider! To whom have You done this? Should the women eat their offspring, The children they have cuddled? Should the priest and prophet be slain In the sanctuary of the Lord? (Lamentations 2:20)*

The soup boiling process forces the scum and fat and rust to float to the top of the caldron. The normal practice is to skim the scum from the top with a mesh skimmer. This scum is the sin of the people that would be the first thing you notice.



This disgusting soup scum byproduct is normally waste. God uses this scum to compare to Jerusalem's revolting lifestyle. Their filthy scum is totally visible to all onlookers, because they did not even bother to clean up. Jerusalem had been a filthy and bloody place. There was no effort to deny or hide it. There was no effort to move away from their pigpen of lust and murder and idolatry. They were proud of their sinfulness. Pride over sin is a final stage of any society's destruction. God is now comparing Jerusalem to Sodom:

*Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: <sup>11</sup> “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the LORD. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. <sup>12</sup> “When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? <sup>13</sup> Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. <sup>14</sup> Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. <sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. <sup>16</sup> “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, <sup>17</sup> Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, (Isaiah 1)*

The Jews did not blush over their wickedness. They were shameless and intoxicated with idolatry, and all of the sins that goes with it. This scum that boils to the top was like a badge of nastiness to them. Normal people are ashamed of their sin, and they hide it. These people promoted it.

*<sup>31</sup> “You erected your shrine at the head of every road, and built your high place in every street. Yet you were not like a harlot, because you scorned payment. <sup>32</sup> You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband. <sup>33</sup> Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry. <sup>34</sup> You are the opposite of other women in your harlotry, because no one solicited you to be a harlot. In that you gave payment but no payment was given you, therefore you are the opposite.” <sup>35</sup> ‘Now then, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>36</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD: “Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotry with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children which you gave to them, <sup>37</sup> surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. <sup>38</sup> And I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged; I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy. <sup>39</sup> I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your shrines and break down your high places. They shall also strip you of your clothes, take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you naked and bare. (Ezekiel 16)*

The soup scum in that culture was to be skimmed off of the top, and poured into the dirt. Instead, this parable says it was like it was poured over the elevated and visible rocks like a billboard to show all of the visitors what depravity they stood for. “Let me show you how dark I can be”. It is almost like a pastor's kid who experiences some freedom, and they try to see how far they can go in sin. It was almost like a competition to excel in depravity. It was probably even embarrassing to the unbelieving nations. The Canaanites were following their lusts, but the Jews took it further, and they hauled all of these idol shrines into the temple and surrounding courtyard, like an idol junkyard! Ezekiel 8 describes the varied temple shrines and idols, and the numerous misuses of the temple grounds. They were literally begging God to do something about it. If God is real, don't do this. if God is not real, then why go through this effort to rub it in his face? The answer is that it is demonic influence. This is where it all leads. In fact, you could look at every form of rebellion in our land today and follow it until it leads to the very same place...war with God.

*<sup>4</sup> Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> (James 4:4)*

*“You shall have no other gods before Me. <sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup> but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exodus 20)*

**Read Ezekiel 24:9-14:** God is saying that he will stoke this fire until the meat falls off of the bone in this soup. If he does not complete his disinfection, it will return even more quickly. The emphasis is more on bringing heat, than perfectly cooking meat.

I can recall being on a little family vacation at the Vail Lake Campground. We had a raised fire pit that I kept feeding more and more kindling into. The fire got so

hot, that it melted the fire box and its frame. In this story, God is going to kill the infection; and he is also pretty upset. The heat is going way up, regardless of the collateral damage.



God is going to use extreme measures to separate the sin from the people, even if it causes death. He will burn it out. Anything short of completing that will result in being back in the same situation again. The school of hard knocks has a purpose.

*he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, (1 Peter 4:1)*

*A whip for the horse, A bridle for the donkey, And a rod for the fool's back. <sup>4</sup>Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. <sup>5</sup>Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes. (Proverbs 26)*

This boiling pot could also be viewed as a mini-hell. In hell people will know clearly what they are there for. They will know it is all from their choices. We assume that there is a neutral life that can be peaceably lived apart from Christ. If God is love and peace and comfort and wisdom; then life apart from him has to be discomfort, craziness, and strife. This is not just hot soup. Even the metal pot is melting.

*If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— <sup>44</sup>where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'* (Mark 9:44)

*So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, <sup>50</sup> and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 13:50)*

In this life we get salted with fire (so to speak) to discourage us from continuing in sin. We experience pain in sin, that we might repent.

*<sup>49</sup> “For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. (Mark 9:49)*

*each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3)*

For those who refuse to repent, the fire is not limited to a little burn mark; it is total destruction.

*<sup>29</sup> For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29)*

**Read Ezekiel 24:15-27:** Now this story gets more personal for Ezekiel. Ezekiel and his wife are living in Babylon; and she dies. This can be confusing if you forget that we are going backwards in time again.

Ezekiel chapter 1 began in the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the Babylonian captivity; when Ezekiel and many others had already been long since taken to Babylon. This chapter is written in the 9<sup>th</sup> year after Jehoiachin was taken into captivity. The first siege (Daniel and Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin) was in 599 BC. The second siege was in 587 BC (destruction of temple 12 years later). The third and final siege (clean up and total destruction after governor was killed) was in 582 BC. In other words, this chapter predates the big siege and mass deportation. Ezekiel is going to have to live through the same pain as those who are in rebellion to God, back in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel and his wife had successfully made the journey to Babylon to start their new lives. Nine years later she dies; before the second crushing siege of Jerusalem. Ezekiel is the figurehead for the resident believers in Babylon. He is to hold back his tears and expression of grief while God does what he has to do. God tells him to not shed any public tears. The whole point of this awful event is to communicate that the exiles in Babylon were not to shed a tear for the loss of their family and temple back home. The only path forward is to burn that bridge to the past. Ezekiel is living in a new day. The prophet was not being punished by God. He had to live with this burden of the effects of his countrymen’s sins. This all preceded the many visions that would come to him. This is actually similar to the

apostle John, who was exiled to a tiny island all alone before he began to experience these magnificent visions.

Ezekiel was to exemplify the trust that we have in God that he is making our lives better all of the time. We hang on to things in this world that we have become very attached to. We want all of our loved ones to surround us. We do not like change. Whatever God takes away is always a good thing...even though we might hate it. God is the only one who uses subtraction to make additions. God did not want to the Jews to carry on with their excessive mourning rituals for lost souls and family in Jerusalem. You could compare it to people crying about Israel's military bombings in Iran. It had to be done. Some people died. Undue sorry over our personal losses can turn a victory into a loss.

God is not telling us to rejoice when men's lives are destroyed either.

*Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; <sup>18</sup> Lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, And He turn away His wrath (Proverbs 24:17-18)*

In the end, God is preparing the way for a future generation to be able to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild. We hate to see people die, but God told them to leave. God's will is right and good. Our will is extremely biased and fickle.