

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EZEKIEL 4-7

America has had a long list of stunt men - daredevils who capture our attention with their daring dos.

In 1829, “[the Jersey Leaper](#)” named “*Sam Patch*” jumped 100 feet into the waters below Niagara Falls...

In the 1920s [a flagpole sitter](#), “*Al (Shipwreck) Kelly*,” stayed aloft on top of a pole for an incredible 49 days...

In the 1970s, Evel Knievel broke every bone in his body jumping motorcycles over cars and fountains.

All these daredevils attracted huge crowds. It seems we’re all mesmerized by daring stunts and stuntmen.

And this very human tendency doesn’t go unnoticed by God. In the OT when God’s people, Israel, refused to listen to conventional communication, God resorted to stunts - *object lessons - visual dramatizations*. He would call on a prophet to perform a spiritual skit!

And no one performed more of these living parables than Ezekiel. This is why I call Ezekiel, “[The Stuntman of the Scriptures](#).” God commissioned this prophet to do some wild, weird, strange, attention-grabbing stuff!

All Ezekiel’s antics were designed to seize the attention of the Jews in Babylon - and to communicate to them vital truths concerning their faith and future.

Tonight, in the four chapters we’ll study (Ezekiel 4-7) the prophet will act out seven different visual parables.

He begins in Chapter 4, “You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem.” Babylonians wrote on clay tablets or bricks. Archaeologists have unearthed many examples.

They were generally a foot square - the screen size of a laptop... Ezekiel is told to take one of these bricks, and carve into its surface a detailed picture of the city of Jerusalem - with all its various walls and gates.

Then “Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around.”

Here’s a task your little boys would enjoy.

Ezekiel was to create miniature battering rams and siege towers and reenact an attack on Jerusalem.

He may’ve even used some toy soldiers. It was like the epic battles my boys use to fight in the backyard.

There was a reason for his little re-enactment... God was about to use Babylon to lay siege to Jerusalem. What had become an idolatrous city would soon fall.

Remember, in Jeremiah, false prophets were saying, “peace, peace.” They were the positive thinking crowd. “Don’t worry, be happy” - *everything will be okay*.

Whereas, Jeremiah was warning just the opposite.

In fact, these false prophets had nerve. By this point, Babylon had already invaded Jerusalem twice. The king of Babel, Nebuchadnezzar, had deposed Judah’s King, Jehoiachin, and taken him captive to Babylon.

But the false prophets were persistent. Not only in Jerusalem, *but in Babylon*, there were false prophets saying the Jewish exile would be brief. God would turn the tables on the Babylonians and deliver Jerusalem.

God raise up Ezekiel and his clay city to counter the false prophets. A final siege will occur. The city will be conquered and destroyed. Babylon will be home to the Jews for 70 years. They need to accept their fate, and settle down. They won't be going home anytime soon.

It was an unpopular message, but it was the truth.

Verse 3, **“Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it as an iron wall between you and the city.”** God is still talking of the miniature city made of clay.

“Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel.” This iron plate was probably a cooking pan - like an iron skillet. It symbolized an impenetrable barrier between the people and God.

Here's the picture Ezekiel is creating... Jerusalem will come under siege, and when the rebellious people cry out to God, He'll be behind this iron barrier.

Sin is like an iron plate - it cuts off a person or people from God. It prohibits prayers from rising - and God's blessings from falling. The only cure is repentance. The first prayer God answers is the prayer of repentance.

But now God commissions skit 2... **“Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. According to the number of the days that you lie on it, you**

shall bear their iniquity. For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.” This is bizarre. Ezekiel is literally called to *lie down on the job*.

Recall, after Solomon’s reign, the Hebrew kingdom split in two. The northern ten tribes were governed from Samaria, and became known as **Israel**. While the southern tribe, or **Judah**, stayed loyal to Jerusalem.

Here, Ezekiel is to dramatize God’s judgment on both nations by lying on his side - a day for each year of judgment. He’s to lie on his left side for 390 days - or 13 Babylonian months - over a year. Then flip on to his right side and lie there another 40 days, for the 40 years of judgment that’s coming on the nation Judah.

Ezekiel is in Babel, so if his head was pointed toward Jerusalem, on his left side he’d be facing northward toward Israel - on his right he’s looking south to Judah.

Verse 7, “Therefore you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem; your arm shall be uncovered, and you shall prophesy against it. And surely I will restrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another till you have ended the days of your siege.”

Apparently, the prophet Ezekiel isn’t allowed to roll over until he finishes the required time for both sides.

Read the commentaries and a large number suggest Ezekiel didn't actually spend twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for 430 days on his side.

They assume there was a ceremonial fulfillment of the prophecy. He took the posture at only certain times of the day. But that's conjecture... we don't really know.

The language seems to apply something extraordinary. The Lord says *"I will restrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another..."* The word *"restrain"* means *"to tie down with ropes."* The prophet was strapped in position. His movement was restricted.

I would think he literally stayed in a reclining position for 430 days, and was probably supernaturally helped.

Either way, imagine the saddle sores!

Patients restricted to a hospital bed for lengthy periods of time end up with serious bed sores. This would've been true of *Ezekiel's laying down on the job!*

Obedience to God can produce some saddle sores.

When you're called by God to remain in a certain place, or situation, or relationship - you get antsy. You want to squirm and escape. But God restricts your movement. It can get uncomfortable. Sore spots fester.

Maybe it's *a job you can't stand*, or *a marriage that's become strained*, or *a friendship that's being tested*, or *a church you've grown tired of...* yet God has called you to stick it out. Everyone else is saying you need to take a stand, but

God says stay on ***His side***. It's not easy to just *lie down* when you feel like *walking off*.

And God has supernatural cords to keep us in position. It's not always apparent, but it's when we're stretched - in the awkward postures of life - that God is working something needful and wonderful in our lives.

It's interesting, God does make one concession for Ezekiel. He allows him the freedom on his arm. Most preachers can't talk without using their arms, so Ezekiel is allowed one arm to feed himself, write, etc.

And what do we make of the punishment's length - *the 390 years for Israel and the 40 years for Judah?*

When you try to tie these timeframes to historical fix points, it gets difficult. There're lots of theories, none of which fit exactly. The sands of time have obscured the exact dates. *I'm offering an educated guess...*

Israel's 390 years of judgment could extend from the reign of their first king, Jeroboam, and their split from the southern tribe of Judah - until the Jews return to Jerusalem after their seventy years of exile in Babylon.

Trouble started for the northern kingdom in 931 BC when Jeroboam set up two golden calves in Dan and Bethel as an alternative to God's Temple in Jerusalem.

It was a devastating mistake from which Israel never really recovered. In a sense, the moment the northern ten tribes cut themselves off from the worship of the true God in Jerusalem their judgment was fixed.

And it lasted until 536 BC when members of the northern tribes who had become part of Judah and had been taken into exile, returned to Jerusalem. So from 931 to 536 you have 395 years - not exactly 390, but we're in the ballpark - *390 give or take five years.*

As for the southern kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC. According to Jeremiah 52:30 the last Jewish deportation to Babylon took place in 581 BC. That could be when Judah's judgment begins.

It too ends in 536 BC when the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. So from 581 to 536 BC you have 45 years. That's exactly 40, give or take five years.

And that is the best I can offer... about that!

But as if lying on his side was not enough, God lays an even heavier burden on his servant... *God puts him on a diet!* Verse 9 tells us, **“Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself.**

During the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it. And your food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it.”

Wheat, barley, beans, lentils, etc. represent a sparse vegetarian diet. This is the type of food rationing city's require if they're under siege. And notice the meager portions - *twenty shekels* would be just *ten ounces*.

“You shall also drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; from time to time you shall drink.” A “hin” was an ancient measurement of six quarts. One-sixth is a quart. Again, this illustrated the rationing that will go on in Jerusalem when the Babylonian army hems them in.

“And you shall eat it as barley cakes; and bake it using fuel of human waste in their sight.” *Woe, nelly!*

When a city is under siege and supply lines get cut off, the first luxury item to stop shipping is Kingsford Charcoal. People under siege have to resort to more primitive fuels... After you're burned all the wood, and broken up all the furniture, all that's left is poop...

Literally, human waste becomes cooking fuel. And Ezekiel is to use it as a preference. It epitomizes the siege conditions that are coming upon Jerusalem.

Verse 13, “Then the Lord said, “So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, where I will drive them.” So I said, “Ah, Lord God! Indeed I have never defiled myself from my youth till now; I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has abominable flesh ever come into my mouth.” Then He said to me, “See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it.” Remember Ezekiel was a Hebrew priest, as well as a prophet. And he had prepared himself, by remaining holy to the Lord. From his youth he diligently kept the law, including its dietary code.

In Leviticus 19:19 the Law of Moses prohibited the mixing of grains. This made Ezekiel's diet non-kosher.

The Law even gave instructions on how to defecate. Deuteronomy 23:12 states, “You shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse.” This was healthy sanitation. And it obviously precluded using your dung as cooking fuel.

In both regards, God’s command to Ezekiel would violate aspects of the Law. He was a priest, *no less*. He should be keeping God’s Law. He was confused.

Verse 16, “Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread, that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity.”

Rather than teach His people how to observe the ceremonial and symbolic aspects of the Law, God is warning them how to survive in a life-and-death crisis.

The Jews are going to face catastrophic conditions.

God does provide Ezekiel a concession. Rather than human waste he allows him to cook over a cow patty.

This is a merciful moo-ve on God’s part.

Ezekiel is being asked to put God’s command ahead of his religious training, and his own conscience. To make it easier for him he’s allowed to use cow poop.

It's interesting, usually our conscience is God's tool to help us sort out right from wrong. But there are times when it becomes our enemy. The conscience is a body member that gets trained. *Religious training, and a person's upbringing* - help to program our conscience.

And at times we're betrayed by our previous training.

Remember, much like Ezekiel, Peter had been trained by a legalistic Jewish heritage. He too, was raised *kosher*. This is why it surprised Peter when God called him to a picnic where everything on the menu was unclean. When God told Peter to "kill and eat." He balked, "not so, Lord." God went on to show Peter that He could change the rules when need be. What once was considered *unclean*, God now deemed proper.

And if God could do this with foods, He could also do it with people. Though the Gentiles had been considered *unclean* in times past, God was cleansing them now through the cross of Jesus. God was doing a new work to bring unclean Gentiles into His family.

And like Peter and Ezekiel, if you've ever lived under strict, legalistic training there may come a time when your conscience works to oppose the grace of God.

When that time comes it's vital to remember 1 John 3:20, "For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." When your conscience contradicts God's grace, listen to God not your conscience! "*God is greater than our heart.*"

Ezekiel had a hard time corralling his conscience when it came to human waste. That's probably a bigger hurdle than

Peter had to jump over. We assume Peter's unclean meat was at least cooked over nice firewood.

It was tough for a priest to cook over human feces so God let's him use cow patties. I believe Zeke still heard God say, "Well DUNG, good and faithful servant."

Chapter 5, "And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair." *Imagine men, shaving with a sword.*

I'm prone to nick myself with a razor. If I had to shave with a sword I'd come out of the bathroom cut to ribbons - bleeding everywhere... And Ezekiel is called by God to not only shave his face and beard, but his entire head. He had nicks, and slashes, and gashes all over himself. He probably went through a whole box of bandaids. You'd think he'd been in a knife fight.

And that was exactly the effect God was after!

The Jewish population under siege, would end up sliced and diced, and slaughtered by the Babylonians.

Ezekiel was told to weigh and divide his shavings for a reason. "You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of

Israel.” What Ezekiel does with his shavings illustrates what will happen to the Jews in Jerusalem...

A third will die from the terrible conditions that prevail during the siege... A third will die during the invasion...

A third will be scattered to foreign lands and they'll end up dying there... A small few will be protected in the hem of God's garment. They'll be taken back to Babylon, or allowed to continue in the land of Judah...

A last group will flee to Egypt and be slain there.

Verse 5, “**Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her.’**” Jerusalem is situated at the Earth’s center - *geographically and strategically.*

Even today, events that occur in Jerusalem end up as news headlines in papers all around the world.

Yet God says of Jerusalem, “**She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.’** Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘**Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you’ - therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations.’**”

God compared the obedience of the Jews, with the conduct of the pagan nations around them. His own people were worse than their idolatrous neighbors.

The Jews had been given great privilege. God had intervened in their history, and given them His Law. Yet their behavior was worse than the ignorant Gentiles.

And with privilege comes responsibility.

God holds His people accountable... And this should be a warning to us, for of all people those of us who are in Christ are the most blessed. God has lavished His grace upon us. Therefore, we need to be faithful!

Verse 9, “**And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.**”

The sins of His people were so despicable that God pulled out all the stops in meting out punishment. *God acted in a way*, that He admits He may never act again.

Here’s another byproduct of the coming siege. Food will be so scarce the Jews will resort to cannibalism.

These were devastating plagues God reserved for extreme disobedience. But after all He’d done for Israel, for them to dive so deeply into idolatry, it called for a radical, attention-getting judgment, on God’s part.

And you wonder if this won't be God's attitude in the last days. Right now, God is offering salvation to man.

He's waiting until the world is ripe for the judgment of all judgments. What Scripture calls, "Great Tribulation."

Recall what Jesus said of the end times in Matthew 24:21-22, "Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." Serious sin calls for severe punishment. In lieu of today's unbridled abominations, the most severe may be yet to come.

"Therefore, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity.'" God is referring to what the Jews did in the Temple courtyards. In the days of kings Manasseh and Jehoiakim they brought their idols into the Holy of Holies, the resting place of God's glory.

This was disgusting. *In the heart of the Temple, in the place of God's presence,* they defiled it with idols.

Today, Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies are reserved for God. And we can defile the temple by making an idol of something in our lives...

Remember 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Verse 12, “One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. ‘Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them. Moreover I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that are all around you, in the sight of all who pass by. ‘So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that are all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the Lord, have spoken.”

God will make the Jews an object lesson to the surrounding peoples of what happens when you refuse to live up the spiritual privileges you’ve been given.

“When I send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. So I will send against you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the Lord, have spoken.”

Before we move on, I’ve got one more cannibal joke to tell you. Several weeks ago I told a few cannibal jokes, and afterwards, JP told me the best one...

Two cannibals were eating a pastor, when one starts choking. He’s swallowing hard. His buddy asks, “*What’s*

wrong? Are you ok?" He clears his throat, "Oh, I'm okay. It's just hard to keep a good man down."

In chapters 6 and 7 Ezekiel further explains his actions in chapters 4 and 5. Chapters 4-5 are the *dramatizations*. Chapters 6-7 are the *divine editorials*.

Chapter 6, "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying: "Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, to the hills, to the ravines, and to the valleys: "Indeed I, even I, will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places." It's as if the people aren't listening to God, so He speaks to the mountains, hills, valleys, ravines - He speaks to land. It's God's way of saying to the people of Judah, "*Hey, is there anybody home?*"

"Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. And I will lay the corpses of the children of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones all around your altars." In all ancient religions the scattering of bones - coming in contact with dead objects - desecrates the altar of a god.

Here, their own dead bodies will defile their altars.

"In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate, so that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, your idols may be broken and made to cease, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be abolished." Remember, in the OT altars to

idols were built on elevated platforms, the so-called “*high places.*”

The ancients assumed the closer they got to heaven, or the higher they ascended, the easier it would be to get the attention of their god. Thus, the high places became notorious outposts for idolatry.

And God was against these high places. Even if the altar was dedicated to Him. This kind of rogue, individualized worship often degenerated into some kind of idolatry. That’s why God outlawed the high places, and centralized His worship to the Temple.

Verse 7, “*The slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the Lord.*” Let’s not deceive ourselves into thinking that idolatry was merely a problem in ancient times - a temptation for primitive cultures - that it’s no concern to us in modern times...

Social critic, Oliver Wendell Holmes, once said, “*Men are idolaters, and want something to look at, and kiss, and hug, and throw themselves down before; they always did, they always will; and if you don't make it out of wood, you must make it out of words.*”

Idols are not just images made of wood or metal, they can be *items*, or *identities*, or *ideas*, even *ideals*.

A idol might sit in your driveway, or it could be a philosophy that captures the hearts of thousands.

I like how Paul Tillich defines it, “*Idolatry is the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimacy.*” Life is full of preliminaries...

making money, buying a house, going on vacation, how the Braves will do this season...

But when a preliminary gets exalted to ultimacy it becomes an idol. Our hearts are fickle. They easily get distracted and get preoccupied with lesser things...

Idols are everywhere. St. Augustine once stated, "Idolatry is worshipping anything that ought to be used, and using anything that ought to be worshipped."

Remember 1 Corinthians 10:14, "Flee from idolatry."

Verse 8, "Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries." God will not judge all the Jews. He'll leave behind in every country a faithful remnant, who remain loyal to Him.

"Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am the Lord; I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them." *Do you feel God's pain? Do you hear His heart break? "I was crushed by their adulterous heart.."*

What adultery is to a marriage relationship, idolatry is to our relationship with God. It is spiritual infidelity!

Realize, in issuing these judgments on His people God was not playing the part of some cold, calculating, uncaring Judge. Rather, He is reacting as a jilted lover.

God is the loyal and adoring husband who's lived for years to serve the one He loves, only to have his spoiled, selfish, fickle wife turn from Him and run into the arms of another man... Then despite His pleadings for her to return, she chooses to live in open adultery, carrying on a love affair in public, where everyone can mock and laugh at the gullibility of her faithful husband.

She has no regard for His feelings or reputation. She shames Him with public nudity and by performing intimate acts with anyone and everyone... This is what God had endured with His people, Israel, for centuries.

Read it again, *"I was crushed by their adulterous heart..."* It's hard to fathom, *the Almighty was crushed.*

Apparently, God gives *His people* power over *His own heart*. As Christians we should realize when we flirt with the world, or toy with idols, we can crush God.

A child of God you can delight the Lord, or we can cause Him pain. Ezekiel says God's heart was crushed by the whorish deeds of His people, Israel.

And notice, back in verse 4 and 6, when God talks about *"breaking"* their idols, it's the same Hebrew word here translated, *"crushed."* God will do to the idols, what His idol-seeking people have done to His heart.

Verse 11, *"Thus says the Lord God: "Pound your fists and stamp your feet, and say, 'Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.'" Here's another attention-grabbing stunt for Ezekiel to perform.*

He's to pitch a fit... Pound his fist. Stomp his feet.
Condemn Israel's idolatry and predict disaster!

“He who is far off shall die by the pestilence, he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged shall die by the famine. Thus will I spend My fury upon them.” Remember this was all illustrated by Ezekiel's shave, and the distribution of his hair...

“Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when their slain are among their idols all around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every thick oak, wherever they offered sweet incense to all their idols.” When the carcasses of Jews are found on the high places - the altars of their idols - then they'll know that God is God!

“So I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land desolate, yes, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, in all their dwelling places.

Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” We've seen this phrase now numerous times. It's a theme in Ezekiel, *“Then they shall know that I am the Lord.”*

Chapter 7, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “And you, son of man, thus says the Lord God to the land of Israel: ‘An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land.” Chapter 7 is judgment set to verse. It's a poem of punishment.

False prophets had been predicting deliverance for the Jews. Ezekiel says, *“Not so, the end has come!”*

It's the end of the road for Jerusalem and the land!

And it's the end of the road for the Jews. "Now the end has come upon you, and I will send My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will repay you for all your abominations."

Verse 4, "My eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity; but I will repay your ways, and your abominations will be in your midst; then you shall know that I am the Lord!" "Thus says the Lord God: 'A disaster, a singular disaster; behold, it has come! An end has come, the end has come; it has dawned for you; behold, it has come! Doom has come to you, you who dwell in the land; the time has come, a day of trouble is near, and not of rejoicing in the mountains. Now upon you I will soon pour out My fury, and spend My anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will repay you for all your abominations. 'My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will repay you according to your ways, and your abominations will be in your midst. Then you shall know that I am the Lord who strikes."

And what a striking name for God, "Jehovah-Naka" or literally, "the God who strikes." I doubt if any of you have ever thought of God as "*the God who strikes.*"

He's the God who hits - Who spans - Who lashes out when needed... You can't just blaspheme God over and over, disregard His holiness, and take His grace for granted - and expect God to just grin and beat it.

There's a point when God strikes back. To be just, when a sinner strikes God - God has to strike back.

And this is what makes His grace so amazing!

When God decided to address and resolve the penalties for sin, and atone for the sinner. Instead of Him striking the sinner, God struck His only Son.

Isaiah 53:4-5 says of Jesus, “He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” The God who *strikes* became *the stricken*. The Jews struck Him. The Romans struck Him. Isaiah says **we** struck Him too...

And here’s the irony of all ironies, it’s the stripes we inflicted on Him, that He has used to bring us healing. That truly does make God’s grace... *amazing grace!*

Again, there’s rhythm to this chapter. It’s *violence set to verse*... The poetry continues in verse 10, ‘Behold, the day! Behold, it has come! Doom has gone out; the rod has blossomed, pride has budded.

Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, none of their multitude, none of them; nor shall there be wailing for them. The time has come, the day draws near. ‘Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is on their whole multitude. For the seller shall not return to what has been sold, though he may still be alive; for the vision concerns the whole multitude, And it shall not turn back; no one will strengthen himself who lives in iniquity.’ In other words, commerce will cease in Jerusalem. Babylon will control the business of the city.

“They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, but no one goes to battle; for My wrath is on all their **multitude.**” The Hebrew military will fail. When the battle trumpet sounds no one will have the will to fight.

Jewish troops are an army of deserters and cowards.

“The sword is outside, and the pestilence and famine **within.**” Sword and starvation have the city surrounded.

“Whoever is in the field will die by the sword; and whoever is in the city, famine and pestilence will devour him. ‘Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each for his iniquity. Every hand will be feeble, and every knee will be as weak as water.

They will also be girded with sackcloth; horror will cover them; shame will be on every face, baldness on all their **heads.**” This is not a meeting for [The Hair Club For Men](#). A shaved head was a sign of great grief.

Verse 19, “They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because it became their stumbling block of iniquity.” In the end their wealth will be useless. Their silver and gold will have no buying power. It won’t buy what they need - *food or peace.*

‘As for the beauty of his ornaments, He set it in majesty; but they made from it the images of their abominations - their detestable things; therefore I have made it like refuse to them. I will give it as plunder into the hands of strangers, and to the

wicked of the earth as spoil; and they shall defile it. I will turn My face from them, and they will defile My secret place; for robbers shall enter it and defile it.” Ezekiel is talking of the Temple. The beautiful jewel in the crown of Jerusalem.

But hordes of Babylonian warriors will trample it and strip it of its gold and silver. Temple robbers will loot its treasures and defile God’s once sacred precincts. Eventually, they burned the Temple to the ground.

Verse 23, “Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence.”

Here's another stunt for God’s stuntman - make a chain. It’ll illustrate the bondage that is on the horizon.

“Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles, and they will possess their houses; I will cause the pomp (or “pretense”) of the strong to cease... Those who acted like they were strong were proven to be weak.

“And their holy places shall be defiled. Destruction comes; they will seek peace, but there shall be none. Disaster will come upon disaster, and rumor will be upon rumor. Then they will seek a vision from a prophet; but the law will perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders.” They’ll look to the false prophets for some assurance, but at this point there’re nowhere to be found. The Babylonians are *looting shops*, and *pillaging homes*, and *trampling the Temple*.

Verse 27, “The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the common people will tremble. I will do to them according to their way, and

according to what they deserve I will judge them; then they shall know that I am the Lord!”

Notice the terrifying words, “*according to what they deserve I will judge them...*” May that never be said over you or me. None of us want what we’re owed! We deserve death and hell. **We want mercy, not justice!**