

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EZEKIEL 12-15

Three times, in the last 33 years, I endured one of life's most traumatic experiences. *I moved...* I packed up and moved out of one house into another house.

And what an ordeal it is... *I prefer dental work!*

Yet God called Ezekiel to pack his bags and move out of his house twice a day - morning and evening.

In Chapter 12 God's stuntman is back at it. Ezekiel's strange antics attract the attention of his fellow Jewish neighbors, and sends them a message from God.

Chapter 12, "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying: "Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear; for they are a rebellious house. "Therefore, son of man, prepare your belongings for captivity, and go into captivity by day in their sight. You shall go from your place into captivity to another place in their sight. It may be that they will consider, though they are a rebellious house. By day you shall bring out your belongings in their sight, as though going into captivity; and at evening you shall go in their sight, like those who go into captivity."

When the invaders deported the Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon, this is what the exiles did. They packed their bags and moved out of their houses.

God continues, "Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry your belongings out through it." Imagine, the Jews in Jerusalem. When the invasion began they bolted their doors

shut. To capture the inhabitants, the enemy dug through their walls. *This is a reenactment.*

Verse 6, “In their sight you shall bear them on your shoulders and carry them out at twilight; you shall cover your face, so that you cannot see the ground, for I have made you a sign to the house of Israel.”

So I did as I was commanded. I brought out my belongings by day, as though going into captivity, and at evening I dug through the wall with my hand. I brought them out at twilight, and I bore them on my shoulder in their sight.” Twice a day Ezekiel moves out of his own house - with his suitcases in hand.

In the morning it was through the front door. In the evening he dug out through his exterior walls.

Imagine, if you were one of his neighbors, and you saw this going on day after day. You’d think he was a nut. You’d start calling him “U-Haul” or “Mayflower”..

Verse 8, “And in the morning the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, ‘What are you doing?’ Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are among them.”’ Say, ‘I am a sign to you. As I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall be carried away into captivity.’

And the prince who is among them shall bear his belongings on his shoulder at twilight and go out. They shall dig through the wall to carry them out through it. He shall cover his face,

so that he cannot see the ground with his eyes.” Ezekiel's antics were a message to a specific “*prince*” - who was actually the acting king.

The real king, the Davidic successor, Jeconiah, was still alive, but had already been taken to Babylon. The Babylonians replaced him with his Uncle Zedekiah.

But soon Zedekiah, and the Jews in Jerusalem, will be forced to move. They'll pack their bags, and be led out of the city through holes and breeches in the walls.

Verse 13, “I will also spread My net over him, and he shall be caught in My snare. I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there.” Read Jeremiah 34:3 and there seems to be a discrepancy. He says of Zedekiah, “Your eyes shall see the eyes of the King of Babylon.”

One prophet says Zedekiah will see Babylon's King - the other, says he'll reach Babylon, but won't see it. And this seeming discrepancy was known to Zedekiah.

The first century, Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, records some interesting observations, “It happened that (Jeremiah and Ezekiel) agreed with one another in what they said in all other things, that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive; but Ezekiel disagreed with (Jeremiah), and said, that Zedekiah should not see Babylon; while (Jeremiah) said... that the king of Babylon would carry him away... and because they did not both say the same thing as to this circumstance, (Zedekiah) disbelieved (all that they had)... agreed in, and condemned (both prophets) as not speaking truth...”

Because they seemed to disagree on this one point, Zedekiah threw out everything they both had to say.

Here's the irony, both prophets were right. Time and history clear up what was assumed to be contradictory.

1 Kings 25 tells us when Zedekiah was captured he wasn't immediately taken to Babylon. He first met King Nebuchadnezzar at his field headquarters in Syria. There the two men met eye to eye as Jeremiah said.

And it was in Riblah, Syria the Babylonian king killed Zedekiah's sons before his very eyes; then had his own eyes plucked out, so his last sight would be their deaths. This meant Ezekiel's prophecy was also true. Zedekiah *"shall not see (Babel), though he'll die there."*

And the moral of the story... *don't be so quick to say that God has contradicted Himself!* Just because He doesn't feel obliged to give us all the details, or resolve all our questions - doesn't mean what God has said isn't true! We need to trust God's word, even when He doesn't give us all the information we'd like.

Verse 14 continues Ezekiel's prophecy against the prince, Zedekiah, *"I will scatter to every wind all who are around him to help him, and all his troops; and I will draw out the sword after them. "Then they shall know that I am the Lord, when I scatter them among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries. But I will spare a few of their men from the sword, from famine, and from pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the Gentiles wherever they go. Then they shall know that I am the Lord."*

Verse 17, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and anxiety.”

In other words, eat every piece of bread as if it were your last, and sip every cup of water as if it were the last drops in the bucket. Eat and drink in desperation.

This is how the Jews in Jerusalem will behave when the Babylonians lay siege to their city and cut off the supply lines... Talk about some severe food rationing and water conservation... the Jews will go to extremes!

“And say to the people of the land, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the land of Israel: “They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink their water with dread, so that her land may be emptied of all who are in it, because of the violence of all those who dwell in it. Then the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall become desolate; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”’” And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Son of man, what is this proverb that you people have about the land of Israel, which says, ‘The days are prolonged, and every vision fails’?” God asks Ezekiel about a jingle that had become popular in Jerusalem.

There were scoffers among God’s people who laughed at the prophets and their warnings of God’s judgment. They composed catchy proverbs and jingles to make light of what God had said. Here He quotes one, “*The days are prolonged, and every vision fails.*”

In other words, we keep hearing about judgment, but we never see it. Jeremiah and Ezekiel keep crying wolf, but there's nothing to fear. The threats don't exist.

It's interesting Peter says this will also be the case in the last days. 2 Peter 3:3-4, "Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'where is the promise of His coming?'" People will mock the judgments that precede the Lord's coming, as they mocked Ezekiel.

Verse 23, "Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will lay this proverb to rest, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel."' God replaces their arrogant little jingle with a proverb of His own! "But say to them, "The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision." *Time has come and it's all coming down.*

And this would seem to be an appropriate comeback to today's scoffers... *the rebirth of the nation Israel, the unification of Europe, plans to rebuilt the Temple, bizarre weather patterns...* The biblical visions are being fulfilled. It's an indication that the end is at hand!

"For no more shall there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it," says the Lord God." Ezekiel could speak to Jerusalem with certainty that their time was now up.

The Lord has not given us such certainty. We see signs, but no one knows the day or the hour of our Lord's return... Yet we should always be ready!

I would rather die expecting the Lord's return, than to relax, be surprised, and go to heaven caught off-guard.

The godly pastor Horatius Bonar would lie down to sleep at night, open his shades, look up to heaven, and say, "[Perhaps tonight, Lord.](#)" Then in the morning when he rose to greet a new day, he'd always say, "[Perhaps today, Lord.](#)" "[Perhaps tonight, perhaps today...](#)" that's a good way to live. The Lord wants us always vigilant.

Verse 26, "[Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.'](#)

[Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "None of My words will be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done," says the Lord God.'](#)"

Chapter 13, [And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the Lord!'"](#)

Understand what you see isn't always what you get. Several years ago a consumer advocacy group studied brands of food, and made some startling discoveries...

[Prego Spaghetti Sauce with Mushrooms](#) contains just half of one mushroom... A [Patio Beef and Bean Burrito](#) has just seven beans... A [Banquet Vegetable Pie](#) consisted of 10

peas, 1/20th of a carrot, and 1/19th of a potato... Three Pillsbury Hungry Jack Buttermilk Pancakes contain less than a teaspoon of buttermilk...

I could go on... Suffice it to say, what you see isn't always what you get. And this was true of the Jewish prophets. They claimed to be from God, but they weren't... *False prophets existed, both then and now.*

Verse 3, "Thus says the Lord God: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!" The prophets in Israel said, "*Hear the word of the Lord,*" but they were really speaking out of their own heart. They were spouting their own wisdom.

In the gold rush of the 1800s, sometimes it was said of a minor, "*He's married the vein.*" It meant he was no longer objective. He'd convinced himself there was gold in the mine he was working, regardless of whether he'd seen any evidence. He was believing his own lie.

And this is how a false prophet gets his start. He tells a lie so often he begins to believe it. He becomes self-deluded. That's why he's so convincing to others.

Remember, sin can shape doctrine. Often a pastor who succumbs to his own lusts and sexual appetites begins to soften his stance toward morality. He starts twisting the Scripture to support his own sinful lifestyle.

Just before he died, actor Douglas Fairbanks, made the statement, "*I've never felt better.*" It's amazing how adept we can be at self-deception. Rather than trust in your feelings or logic, build your life on God's Word.

Verse 4, “O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts.” A desert fox is a crafty animal. They can slip through the walls of a vineyard and within a few hours do incredible damage. And this is what false prophets had done. They’d ruined God’s vineyard - His people.

It’s interesting, a fox doesn’t *grow fruit*, it *steals fruit*.

And this is the false prophet. Seldom does he win new converts, he preys on ignorant Christians and deceives those who aren’t well grounded in the faith.

It reminds me of the beautiful Russian spy who pried national secrets out of an American official. She seduced him with her charms. During her trial a recording was played of their romantic conversations.

The court heard him say, “You’re so sweet. You’ve stolen my heart.” She replied, “*I know... it’s my job.*”

Stealing hearts is also the job of the false prophet.

Verse 5, “You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord.” Ezekiel’s indictment against Israel is they did nothing to protect their own house. Gaps remained. False prophets were able to prey on people!

In the late 70s Jim Jones and his People’s Temple committed mass-suicide at the compound in Guyana.

Shortly afterwards someone offered an explanation for how he had deceived so many, “His very success was a judgment on the church... for having given people so little religious

substance that they could not recognize heresy when they saw and experienced it.”

And this is an indictment against the church today.

We’ve watered down the message, and opted for an easy-believe-ism. We speak to people’s felt-needs and convince them Christianity exists to make them happy.

We tickle people’s ears, rather than make disciples.

So, when a false teacher comes along and insists on a more demanding, challenging faith, people are drawn to his sincerity, even though his doctrine is heretical.

Verse 6, “They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord!’ But the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination?

You say, ‘The Lord says,’ but I have not spoken.”

Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you,” says the Lord God.

“My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord God.”

God will banish the false prophets from Israel.

And we should rid them from the Church. This is why Paul says in Romans 16:17, “I urge you, brethren, note those who

cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”

Verse 10, “Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying, ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace - and one builds a wall, and they plaster it with untempered mortar...”
Or a cheap grade of mortar.

The false prophets of Ezekiel’s day were notorious for painting an rosy, optimistic picture of the future.

They seduce God’s people with promises of “*peace.*”

Like someone who built a wall and plastered it with cheap mortar. It looked good, but it wasn’t built to last. And so was the message of the false prophets. It sounded good. It promoted peace. But it wasn’t of God.

And this is what we hear today from false prophets that preach a **Prosperity Gospel**. Do the right thing and you’ll be happy. God wants a healthy, wealthy Church.

Or the false prophet who trumpets **Dominion** or **Kingdom Theology**... When the church uses its political muscle, takes over society, and builds God’s kingdom on Earth - then Jesus comes for a victorious Church.

Yet that’s not what God says is on the horizon.

The world won’t get better and better. Paul wrote to Timothy, “*In the last days perilous times will come.*”

Only Jesus can salvage this evil world, and establish His kingdom. Our goal isn’t to transform *institutions*, but to rescue *individuals*. Rather than be part of a *takeover*, we’re destined

to be part of a *take-off*. Before God's judgment goes down, the Church will go up.

Yet the truth is often a tough pill to swallow.

Christians would rather equate *success with status*, and *power with prosperity*, and *victory with votes*.

We don't like hearing the truth, "those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." God measures success by faithfulness even in the midst of hardship.

In verse 11 God tells Ezekiel, "say to those who plaster it with untempered mortar, that it will fall. There will be flooding rain, and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it down.

Surely, when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the mortar with which you plastered it?'"

Therefore thus says the Lord God: "I will cause a stormy wind to break forth in My fury; and there shall be a flooding rain in My anger, and great hailstones in fury to consume it." The storm God speaks of is the Babylonian invasion. Their army moves in like a flood.

"So I will break down the wall you have plastered with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be uncovered; it will fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst of it. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

"Thus will I accomplish My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it with untempered mortar; and I will say to you, 'The wall is no more, nor those who plastered it, that

is, the prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,” says the Lord God.” Cracked mortar is unable to keep out the floodwaters; and likewise the message of the false prophets will fail to turn back God’s judgment.

The analogy reminds us of a parable in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said the man who “hears these saying of mine and does them” is like the man who built his life on the rock. When the rain and floods came, the house held firm... It had a solid foundation.

And when times get tough it’s the life that’s *well-rounded* and *well-grounded* in God’s Word that stands strong. The only way to plug a leaky life is to reject the world’s deceptions, and build your life on God’s Word.

Verse 17, “Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them...”

The problem wasn’t just *false prophets*, but *false prophetesses*. Ezekiel was told to confront the Jewish women had been duped by erroneous doctrine.

“And say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the women who sew magic charms on their sleeves, and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive?” These veils were used to cast satanic spells on others, and lure them away from God.

The women sewed amulets or talismans into their clothes. These were good luck charms and associated with the occult. They were a reliance on satanic power.

These people were involved in *the hunting of souls*.

Remember, Nimrod the world's first dictator. The man who revolted against God at the tower of Babel. It was said of Nimrod that he was a "mighty hunter" - not only of animals, but he preyed on the souls of people.

In Revelation 6 the Antichrist of the last days is also portrayed as a hunter. He too hunts for men's souls...

Evil spirits are on safari. They hunt for trophies to inflate their egos. While the Holy Spirit is on a mission of love. Evil spirits are hunters, God's Spirit is a helper!

Verse 19, "And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?" All this deception was being authored by the false prophets. They were taking offerings of barley and bread to tell the people lies.

There would've been no market for the false prophets had the foolish people followed God and studied His truth. It was their lack of Bible knowledge that made them susceptible to these occult practices.

And the same is the case today. Many Christians are biblically illiterate and it sets them up for deception.

Again, the false prophet seldom wins a new convert, he preys on the shallow and untaught believer.

Verse 20, 'Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against your magic charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds." The false prophet would bait the trap - trigger it - then snare the gullible soul as if it were a dumb bird.

God intends to free the souls who've fallen victim.

"I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

"Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life."

Notice the two sins of the false prophet... He makes the righteous sad, and the wicked glad. He gives those who do evil in God's sight, a false sense of security.

He discourages righteousness and emboldens evil. "Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord."""

Chapter 14, "Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?" Notice, it wasn't just the idol on their mantle that

bothered God, it was the *“idol in their hearts.”* And the same is true today.

An idol has been defined as “any secondary pursuit that gets promoted to ultimacy.” An idol becomes anything that we exalt in importance above the Lord.

Here the Lord is asking Ezekiel rhetorically, *“if someone comes to Me with a request on their lips, but has an idol in their heart, should I even entertain their question, let alone give an answer or a solution?”*

In essence, **if a person doesn't exalt the Lord in their heart, are they entitled to His help in their life?**

Verse 4, *“Therefore speak to them, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols.””*

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.””

Here God answers His question. He has only one thing to say to the idolator, repent! *Get rid of your idols.*

God is saying *“Until a person repents, his idols are the only issue I care about.”* Everything else - their *physical pain, emotional sorrow, lack of finances, and broken relationships* are just symptoms of the problem.

It will all keep festering until they repent of their idols and get the right God on the throne of their heart.

God has so much He wants to do in our lives. He has answers to the problems that perplex us. He'll work in our marriage, and help us raise our kids, and straighten out our finances, etc... but first, the issue of our allegiance has to be addressed. Does He have our hearts? Is He Lord? We've got to clear out the idols.

People today want a *blessing* without *bowing*. It don't work that way! God is no fool! He expects to be Lord.

“For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself. I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

“And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the Lord have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired, that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God,” says the Lord God.” This passage brings up a strange scenario.

When an idolater comes to a prophet for advice, and the false prophet gives him erroneous counsel - *just tells him*

what he wants to hear - both are judged, the inquirer and the false counselor - both are destroyed.

In fact, the passage reads, *“if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the Lord induced that prophet...”*

God didn't put the lying words in the prophet's mouth, but He didn't stop him either. He let him spout his nonsense, and the person who was inquiring got what he deserved. In other words, *if you draw from a contaminated well, then expect to drink toxic water.*

Sometimes God chooses to use a false prophet as His instrument of judgment. In the end God will punish the deceiver, but first He allows him to deceive...

Remember God is sovereign over good *and evil*. He never condones or excuses evil, but He can use it. He will punish the false prophet, but after He uses him to deceive! There is such a thing as *a punitive deception*.

This is what Paul discusses in 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

He says that in the last days, the Great Tribulation, many will *“not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

In the last days, God sends on rebellious people a strong delusion to secure their judgment. This is why rebellion is dangerous. It's accompanied by blindness.

Be careful about rejecting God's truth. It's not that you can't come back to God - if you repent, God will take you back - it's that you may never want to.

Choose Satan's lie over God's truth, and God allows a person to really believe the lie. A strong delusion - at times almost a hypnotic effect - accompanies the lie.

Think of what's happened with the teaching of evolution in our culture. Today, most people consider evolution to be a fact, and creation a tip of the hat to tradition. In reality, an objective evaluation reveals more evidence to support creation than evolution.

I'm just saying a lie is lethal because it's laced with delusional abilities. It not only deceives for a time, but it can prohibit a person from ever returning to the truth.

Verse 12, "The word of the Lord came again to me, saying: "Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it."

Realize, God wasn't punishing Judah because of *a single slip-up*, or *a stumble into sin*. God's punishment came because of a long season of sin and rebellion.

The people were guilty of "*persistent unfaithfulness*."

The Jews spent so many years with their backs to God, and God finally had enough. Judgment was due.

Notice, how Ezekiel constructs this verse, “*when a land sins.*” The verbiage sounds like a general principle that can be applied to any nation... even the USA.

When a land sins that nation is headed for judgment.

Ezekiel continues in verse 14, “*Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,*” says the Lord God.” Noah offered the world a way to avert a global flood. Daniel interpreted the king’s dream, and saved the life of his colleagues. Job prayed for his sons and daughters just in case they sinned...

All three men were famous intercessors. They intervened on behalf of others. Yet even Noah, Daniel, and Job can’t halt God’s judgment against His people.

The nation Judah had passed the point of no return.

God’s orders had been issued. God had already pushed *send*. No change of heart, no desperation cries, no last gasp prayers will avert God’s judgment.

Verse 15, “*If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts, even though these three men were in it, as I live,*” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate. “Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, ‘Sword, go through the land,’ and I cut off man and beast from it, even though these three men were in it, as I live,” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would

be delivered. “Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live,” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.”

For thus says the Lord God: “How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem - the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence - to cut off man and beast from it?

Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, both sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it. And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it,” says the Lord God.”

Four plagues will come upon Judah - *the sword, famine, wild beasts, pestilence*. Judgment is certain.

But God will preserve a remnant of Jews. They'll be taken to Babylon, but a new generation will survive.

Chapter 15 declares, “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any other wood, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest?” Both Jewish tradition and biblical imagery identify the “*vine*” as a symbol for Israel. The historian, Josephus, says the doors of the second Temple were engraved with vines.

Isaiah 5, Jeremiah 2, Hosea 10 are all examples.

Psalms 80:8 says of God, “You have brought a vine out of Egypt; you have cast out the nations and planted it...” Israel was the vine that God took from Egypt and planted in the land of Canaan - the promised land.

But Ezekiel asks, *why was the vine better than other types of wood in the forest? Or why were the Hebrews chosen by God over the other nations?*

What purpose did the vine wood serve that other branches were unable to duplicate? Verse 3, “Is wood taken from it to make any object?” The vine is too twisted, too gnarly, to be used as lumber or trim.

“Or can men make a peg from it to hang any vessel on?” Vine wood is too weak to use as a peg or a hook.

“Instead, it is thrown into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and its middle is burned. Is it useful for any work?” And the wood of a vine was too combustible to fuel a fire. It burned out too quickly.

Verse 5, “Indeed, when it was whole, no object could be made from it. How much less will it be useful for any work when the fire has devoured it, and it is burned?”

The only purpose the vine served was to bear fruit!

The same is true with us. As the branch is connected to the vine, we’re grafted into Jesus. In John 15:5 Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” His vitality and life flow through us, and we bear fruit.

We're *too twisted* for God to make anything beautiful out of us. We're *too weak* to hang anything heavy from us. We *burn out too quickly* to be a source of energy.

Like the vine, our only purpose is to bear fruit!

Jesus said, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." When we lean on Jesus - when we rely on Him to do the living in our lives; then we bear fruit - love, joy, peace, self-control, kindness appear in us.

Yet try to muster up these fruits on your own, and you'll produce a pathetic synthetic. Like biting into a wax apple - it's phony and tasteless. The key to living the Christian life is to let Jesus live His life through you!

Verse 6, "Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will set My face against them. They will go out from one fire, but another fire shall devour them. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I set My face against them.'" Because Israel didn't bear fruit, God cast them into the fires of judgment. That's where they've been for 2000 years.

Ezekiel says, "*they will go out from one fire, but another fire shall devour them.*" In essence, "out of the frying pan and into the fire." For two millennia the Jews went from one fiery trial to the next fiery trial.

Track Jewish history, and they were banished from every country to which they fled. Until they were almost extinguished by Hitler. That led to their return home.

Yet Jesus says something similar to us. In John 15 He states, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (Yet...)”

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” Those who refuse to abide in Christ are also destined to be tossed in the fire - also the fires of God’s judgment.

Verse 8 takes us full circle. Ezekiel repeats what he’d explained in 14:12, “Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness,” says the Lord God.” They weren’t being judged for an occasional slip-up, but for “*persistent unfaithfulness.*”