

Ezekiel 7: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 00] Ezekiel chapter 7 Then you will know that I am the Lord.

Thus says the Lord God, Disaster after disaster, Behold it comes, An end has come, The end has come, It has awakened against you, Behold it comes, Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land.

The time has come, The day is near, A day of tumult, A knot of joyful shouting on the mountains. Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you, And spend my anger against you, And judge you according to your ways, And I will punish you for all your abominations, And my eye will not spare, Nor will I have pity, I will punish you according to your ways, While your abominations are in your midst, Then you will know that I am the Lord who strikes.

Behold the day, Behold it comes, Your doom has come, The rod has blossomed, Pride has budded, Violence has grown up into a rod of wickedness, None of them shall remain, Nor their abundance, Nor their wealth, Neither shall there be preeminence among them, The time has come, The day has arrived, Let not the buyer rejoice, Nor the seller mourn, For wrath is upon all their multitude, For the seller shall not return to what he has sold, While they live, For the vision concerns all their multitude, It shall not turn back, And because of his iniquity, None can maintain his life, They have blown the trumpet, And made everything ready, But none goes to battle, For my wrath is upon all their multitude, The sword is without, Pestilence and famine are within, He who is in the field dies by the sword, And him who is in the city, Famine and pestilence devour, And if any survivors escape, They will be on the mountains, Like doves of the valleys,

All of them moaning, Each one over his iniquity, All hands are feeble, And all knees turn to water, They put on sackcloth, And horror covers them, Shame is on all faces, And boldness on all their heads, They cast their silver into the streets, And their gold is like an unclean thing, Their silver and gold are not able to deliver them, In the day of the wrath of the Lord, They cannot satisfy their hunger, Or fill their stomachs with it, For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity, His beautiful ornament, They used for pride, And they made their abominable images, And their detestable things of it, Therefore I make it an unclean thing to them, And I will give it into the hands of foreigners for prey, And to the wicked of the earth for spoil, And they shall profane it, I will turn my face from them, And they shall profane my treasured place, Robbers shall enter and profane it, Forge a chain, For the land is full of bloody crimes, And the city is full of violence, I will bring the worst of the nations,

[3 : 18] To take possession of their houses, I will put an end to the pride of the strong, And their holy places shall be profaned, When anguish comes, They will seek peace, But there shall be none, Disaster comes upon disaster, Rumour follows rumour, They seek a vision from the prophet, While the law perishes from the priest, And counsel from the elders, The king mourns, The prince is rapt in despair, And the hands of the people of the land Are paralysed by terror, According to their way, I will do to them, And according to their judgments, I will judge them, And they shall know, That I am the Lord.

Ezekiel chapter 7 is a new oracle, Beginning with the familiar formula, The word of the Lord came to me. The previous chapter had addressed The mountains and the land of Israel, And this chapter continues to address them.

Ezekiel had been established as a watchman For the house of Israel back in chapter 3. In this chapter he is called to sound the alarm. Daniel Bloch subdivides the oracle into three sections, Verses 2-4, 5-9, and 10-27.

The first two sections, Which have significant similarities to each other, Are marked off in the beginning by Thus says the Lord God, And all three of the sections conclude With what commentators term a recognition formula.

Then you will know that I am the Lord. The Lord is demonstrating his character Through his judgment upon his people. As commentators note, This is a difficult oracle, Presenting many conundrums for the translator and interpreter.

[4 : 52] Marsha Greenberg recognises in the second half of the passage, In verses 12-18, And 19-27, Two rounds of scenes of the end Awaiting the land and its people, Arguing that much as there are large-scale parallels Between verses 2-4 and 5-9 in the first half, Strong connections exist between these two parts Of the second half of the chapter.

He writes, It is evident that the second round, Of the scenes of the end, Not only corresponds to the first, But heightens and specifies it. This is especially clear in the particularisation of sin, Cultic and civil, Of the cruel punishments, And of the detail of institutional collapse.

The second half of the chapter also elaborates the first, Bloch describing it as an intentional exposition Of the two-fold alarm sounds, In verses 2-9.

The chapter speaks of a coming day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is a common theme in the prophets. The day of the Lord is the event in which The Lord will act decisively in history To establish his justice.

It's the day of salvation and deliverance, But also the day of reckoning and vengeance. The people seem to have popularly associated the day With positive themes, But Amos and other prophets Paint a far more forbidding portrait Of the awaited day.

[6 : 12] Amos chapter 5, verses 18-20. Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light, As if a man fled from a lion, And a bear met him, Or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, And a serpent bit him.

Is not the day of the Lord darkness, And not light, And gloom with no brightness in it? Zephaniah also speaks in a similar manner Of the day of the Lord In chapter 1, verses 14-16 of his prophecy.

The great day of the Lord is near, Near and hastening fast. The sound of the day of the Lord is bitter. The mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, A day of distress and anguish, A day of ruin and devastation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet blast and battle cry, Against the fortified cities, And against the lofty battlements.

On the expected day of the Lord, The lights would go out all over Judah, The land and its people engulfed in the darkness Of uttered destruction and desolation. The exiles in Babylon would live through All of this horrific history from a distance.

Ezekiel, the watchman, High on the sentry tower, Receives the word of the Lord. The day of reckoning is at hand, The day of the full measure of the Lord's judgment. It will be comprehensive and conclusive, An end coming upon the four corners of the land.

[7 : 40] Whether people are ready or not, It has arrived, The day when the punishment for all of their sins Would come upon them. They had been warned on numerous occasions By earlier prophets, Even yet, Jeremiah was among them, Offering them the smallest glimmer of hope Of escaping with their lives If they would submit to the Lord's word.

The disaster about to befall them Should not have been a surprise, Nor could it be claimed that it was excessive. The judgment was only according to the measure of their sins. Verses 5-9 repeat and develop this warning.

The watchman's warning trumpet is sounded once more, But louder. One of several difficult words and verses in the chapter, The term that the ESV, with many commentators, Translates as doom in verse 7, A term found elsewhere in Isaiah chapter 28 verse 5 In reference to a diadem, Might, according to Bloch, Here refer to a chain or a leash By which the Israelites would be led off captive to Babylon.

The judgment about to come Would not be tempered by pity, But would be utterly devastating. The third cycle of warning Opens with a staccato series of alarms In verses 10-12.

Verse 10 is especially difficult to interpret, Possibly depending upon a figure of speech That is lost to history. Greenberg observes the fact That its elements are reminiscent Of the story of Aaron's rod In Numbers chapter 17.

[9 : 04] He suggests that it might function As a grim parody of election. The rod might refer to the rod of the Lord's judgment Through a foreign nation. The references to blossoming and budding Making clear that the time was ripe for their destruction.

Alternatively, pointed differently. The vowels of biblical Hebrew were later added As markings around a text That was originally just consonants. The word here might refer Not to a rod, but to perverted justice.

Their sins had reached the full measure And now they face the consequent devastation. Verse 11 is also textually obscure. But its point might be That they would be stripped of everything.

Wealth, plenty, and status. The familiar triad of famine, pestilence, and sword Are set loose upon the people. The city is the realm of famine and pestilence With the sword apportioned to those without.

Economic activity would cease. The economy would vanish. Land that former owners were hoping Would return to their families Would be lost entirely. No class of persons Would escape the general devastation.

[10 : 08] The people are paralysed by fear. The knees turned to water in verse 17 Might be a reference to them wetting themselves. The watchman's trumpets blow in vain. The stoutest hearts are seized by terror.

People crumple in the face of the onslaught. The few abject survivors Are scattered abroad upon the mountains. Greenberg argues for a parallel Between verses 12 to 18 And 19 to 27 With the latter heightening and specifying the former.

What he describes as the futility of commerce In the first round of the scenes of the end In verses 12 to 13 Corresponds with the futility of wealth In verse 19 The impending war, disasters and refugees In verses 14 to 16 With the invasion, desecration and spoilation In verses 21 to 24 Interspersed references to divine anger and the people's sin In verses 12, 13, 14 and 16 Correspond with those in verses 19, 20, 22 and 23 And what he terms the general appallment Of verses 17 to 18 With all classes being paralysed In verses 25 to 27 Bloch suggests that more than the collapse of the economy Is in view in verse 19 Rather, it's a condemnation of the materialism of the people Their souls are being required of them By the Lord's judgement Their enlarged barns are now utterly worthless to them Their silver and gold won't buy them freedom

The Lord would be silent in their distress The prophet would have no vision The priest would no longer be able to bring the clarity of the law to bear And the elders would be dumbstruck The king, the nobles and officials And the citizens would all despair As their sins came upon their heads A question to consider How might the Lord's terrible judgment Against the people's materialism In verse 19 Speak into our own day