EZEKIEL

Chapter 24

*The Cooking Pot*

**In the ninth year, in the tenth month on the tenth day, the word of the LORD came to me:  2 “Son of man, record this date, this very date, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.  3 Tell this rebellious house a parable and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ”‘Put on the cooking pot; put it on and pour water into it. 4 Put into it the pieces of meat, all the choice pieces—the leg and the shoulder. Fill it with the best of these bones; 5 take the pick of the flock. Pile wood beneath it for the bones; bring it to a boil and cook the bones in it. 6 ”‘For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: ”‘Woe to the city of bloodshed, to the pot now encrusted, whose deposit will not go away! Empty it piece by piece without casting lots for them. 7 ”‘For the blood she shed is in her midst: She poured it on the bare rock; she did not pour it on the ground, where the dust would cover it. 8 To stir up wrath and take revenge I put her blood on the bare rock, so that it would not be covered. 9 ”‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: ”‘Woe to the city of bloodshed! I, too, will pile the wood high. 10 So heap on the wood and kindle the fire. Cook the meat well, mixing in the spices; and let the bones be charred. 11 Then set the empty pot on the coals till it becomes hot and its copper glows so its impurities may be melted and its deposit burned away. 12 It has frustrated all efforts; its heavy deposit has not been removed, not even by fire. 13 ”‘Now your impurity is lewdness. Because I tried to cleanse you but you would not be cleansed from your impurity, you will not be clean again until my wrath against you has subsided. 14 ”‘I the LORD have spoken. The time has come for me to act. I will not hold back; I will not have pity, nor will I relent. You will be judged according to your conduct and your actions, declares the Sovereign LORD.’”**

By almost any reckoning, this is a central and pivotal chapter in the book of Ezekiel. By what is probably only a happy coincidence, by chapter count it is also the midpoint of the book (although if we count verses, we have to wait until the end of chapter 25, as the *Masorah finales*, the ancient compilation at the end of each book of the Hebrew Bible, informs us). (CC)

The chapter climaxes and in many ways summarizes everything Ezekiel has been preaching in especially the previous twelve chapters: the fatuity of the people’s illusions that Jerusalem is secure. But the time of reckoning has come. The chapter turns on two fateful days: the beginning of the siege of the city, announced in 24:1, and an anticipation of its fall, which would take place two and a half years later, although its fall is not recorded until 33:21. (CC)

Structurally, the chapter divides into two discrete sections: (1) a מָשָׁל, “parable” (24:3), of a cooking pot and its application (24:1–14) and (2) the action prophecy of Ezekiel’s strange behavior when his wife dies and what it portends. (CC)

**4:1** *ninth year … tenth month … tenth day.* Jan. 15, 588 b.c.; Ezekiel’s fourth date (see 1:2; 8:1; 20:1). (CSB)

The date when the siege of Jerusalem commenced is not formulated in Ezekiel’s usual way. Remarkably, the two other records of this date in the OT (2 Ki 25:1; Jer 52:4) are formulated in almost the identical wording used by Ezekiel. On our modern, Western calendar, this date probably was around January 15, 588. Ezekiel records this date at a time when neither he nor his fellow exiles could possibly know about the events in Judah apart from divine revelation. (CC)

**24:2** *record this date … because.* God revealed to Ezekiel what was happening in Jerusalem. (CSB)

In very careful language, Ezekiel is literally commanded to record the “name” of the day: “the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem on this very day.” The beginning of the siege of Jerusalem was the beginning of the end for the politico-theological system begun by David and Solomon. When word would come nearly two years later of the city’s fall, the reports of the few survivors would be found to match the prophet’s prediction. Not only would that authenticate him as a true prophet to an unbelieving audience (cf. Deut 18:21–22), but in the meantime, it would give a sense of urgency to the prophet’s preaching. Time was running out, not only in the general sense that one never knows the day or the hour (cf. Mt 24:36; 25:13) of future events, but in this pivotal moment in the history of God’s people. The repeated “this very day” indicates that what follows is the culmination and fulfillment of all the prophecies of judgment in chapters 4–23. (CC)

**24:3-5** After the imperative command to note carefully the beginning of the siege (“record,” 24:2), another imperative comes in 24:3 to “tell a parable” (the parable in 24:3–5), and yet another imperative (“take out,” 24:6) occurs at the beginning of the application of the parable (24:6–14). (CC)

The parable is to be addressed to the בֵּית־הַמֶּרִי, “rebellious house” (literally, “house of rebellion” instead of the “house of Israel”), an epithet not voiced for some time (since 17:12). But the motif had been used already in 2:3, 5–8 in Ezekiel’s prophetic commissioning. That is, after all of Ezekiel’s labors, the people’s orientation remained as refractory as ever, and even with the enemy at the gates, they were not about to relent. (CC)

The parable is to center on a סִיר, a cooking “pot.” The process of boiling meat in it is described with eight imperatives in 24:3b–5, with three already in 24:3b. Yahweh had taken up the figure of a cooking pot once before, when he corrected the use of the metaphor by the deluded men of Jerusalem (11:3–11), who thought they were safe within the pot. That passage has affinities to this chapter. Especially significant is the use of מִבְחָר, “choice [cuts of meat],” in 24:4–5, which refers to the people’s illusion of safety and superiority: the residents of Jerusalem considered themselves to be God’s elect, safe within the vessel, despite the earlier deportation of supposedly inferior components of the population. (CC)

We are not told in this parable what sort of meal is being prepared. The impression is clearly given, however, that it will be no ordinary meal. Large quantities of the choicest portions of the choicest animals are to be cooked. And the סִיר is not the clay pot of everyday life, but a copper cauldron (24:11). One plausible hypothesis, especially in the light of Ezekiel’s concern with issues of purity and defilement, is that a cultic meal is in mind. If so, the meal would probably be the שְׁלָמִיםזֶבַח, the “peace offering,” or better, “communion sacrifice” (e.g., Lev 3:1, 3), celebrating both horizontal unity with other believers and vertical fellowship with Yahweh. Thus Block may well be correct in supposing that “a Jerusalem audience would have undoubtedly received this song with great enthusiasm and interpreted it positively.” (CC)

**24:3** *rebellious house.* The last occurrence of this condemning phrase in Ezekiel (see 2:5, 6, 8; 3:9, 26–27; 12:2–3, 9, 25; 17:12). Jerusalem’s rebellion would soon be crushed.

*parable.* Cf. 17:2; 20:49. (CSB)

*cooking pot.* The image of 11:3–12, a discussion of the remnant, here pictures total destruction. The cooking pot is Jerusalem (cf. 11:3). (CSB)

**24:4** *choice pieces.* The people of Jerusalem who thought they were spared the exile in 597 b.c. because of their goodness (see 11:3 and note). (CSB)

**24:5** *wood.* Nebuchadnezzar’s siege equipment. (CSB)

**24:6** *city of bloodshed.* Cf. 22:3. (CSB)

The parable had been addressed to the “rebellious house” (24:3). Both interpretations of it are addressed to “the city of bloodshed” or “the bloody city” (עִיר הַרָּמִים, 24:6, 9), a theme that 24:7–8 will develop at length. Ezekiel had already used that epithet for the city in 22:2. (CC)

*encrusted.* Representing Jerusalem’s irredeemable situation. (CSB)

Since the city is still full of “filth,” that is, impurity and godlessness, the cuts of meat (the inhabitants of the city) will have to be removed one by one, or the city will never be purged. The implication is a frontal challenge to the people’s perception of their status before God. Far from being choice cuts that would surely be saved, the residents of the city are stinking, rotten meat that must be charred and discarded. (CC)

*without casting lots for them.* After the siege of Jerusalem in 597, perhaps the Babylonians had cast lots to see whom they would take away into exile. Now everyone would go. (CSB)

My understanding is that no one in the city will be given any choice. No “lot” will consign only some to death and/or exile, while sparing others; all will, in effect, experience the same judgment. Since all are complicit in the same apostasy, all will suffer the same fate. There will be no need to cast lots to determine guilt (as in Joshua 7), because all have flaunted their blood guilt for all to see. All the meat in the pot is so rotten that no one will be interested in salvaging even a piece. (CC)

**24:7** *blood … on the bare rock.* Jerusalem had brazenly left on display the blood she unjustly shed (cf. Isa 3:9). For uncovered blood see Ge 4:10; Job 16:18; Isa 26:21. (CSB)

“The blood she shed” is a semi-interpretative translation, since the Hebrew simply has “her blood is in her midst.” Israel had many laws pertaining to blood, all centering on the understanding that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev 17:11) and explaining why blood played such a central role in sacrificial contexts of atonement and communion, as it still does in its Christian antitype, the Lord’s Supper. (CC)

“For, because, seeing that” (כִּי) at the beginning of 24:7 suggests that 24:7a may continue the thought of 24:6 and have a different abuse in mind than the rest of the verse. If there is a connection, the hint of cooking a meal (which turned out to be inedible) in 24:6 may mean that in 24:7a Ezekiel has in mind violators of what today are usually referred to as the kosher laws. Especially Lev 17:10–16 lays down strict rules for eating only meat from which all the blood had been thoroughly drained. If Jerusalem, pictured as a cut of meat, still had its blood in its midst, it was unfit for human consumption. Far from being a choice cut, it was, from the sacral standpoint, in the same category as rotten meat, and no one would cast a lot for it (if that clause at the end of 24:6 is relevant here). (CC)

On the other hand, the entirety of 24:7 may refer to the same thing, that is, murder, the shedding of innocent blood, particularly if it was judicial murder as a result of the corruption of the legal system. That understanding would align the entire verse with 22:1–31, where the city had been termed “bloody” (22:2). The sacrificial slaughter of children to Molech, apparently especially on the בָּמוֹת (“high places,” Jer 32:35) may again come into view here (see the commentary on Ezek 16:20–21; 20:31; 23:37). Even when animals or birds were slain for food, the blood was to be poured out and covered with earth (Lev 17:13; Deut 12:16, 23–24; 15:23). Blood that was not covered with earth and buried is pictured as retaining some of its life force. In cases of murder, the blood cries out to heaven for vengeance—so, for the first time, said Yahweh to Cain after his murder of Abel (Gen 4:10). Job (16:18) requests that the earth not cover his blood, so that the outcry over his misfortunes would not cease to seek redress. In Jerusalem, no one had taken the trouble to atone for the people’s murderous activity according to the Mosaic Law. It was not merely a matter of neglect; the people had deliberately poured the blood of their victims on the bare rock, where there was no soil, almost as if in boast of their “lifestyle.” (CC)

**24:8** *wrath.* God’s wrath. What Jerusalem had begun (v. 7), God would complete through judgment. Compare Ex 8:32 with Ex 9:12. (CSB)

There is a surprising shift to the first person as Yahweh himself speaks. Jerusalem’s flaunting of its guilt is really God’s doing. He himself is seeing to it that the blood on the bare rock remains exposed so that the city’s crimes remain manifest, a reminder (a common biblical anthropomorphism) to him to execute his just judgment upon it. Zimmerli laudably terms it “a striking counterpart to the divine remembrance of his [God’s] own mercy in the rainbow in Gen 9:12–17.” He will accomplish this judgment by his wrath at brazen, unrepented sin, thus requiting the wrongs the people have committed (see the textual note on 24:8 regarding נָקַם). (CC)

This is the first time that this oracle explicitly speaks of Yahweh’s response to Jerusalem’s sins. The verse forms a transition to the following verses, which will accent the wrath of Yahweh’s judgment. (CC)

**24:9** The opening words, deliberately repeating 24:6a, lead into the theme of 24:9b–12, namely, that Yahweh himself will intervene directly and see to it that Jerusalem’s deserved punishment is carried out thoroughly. Ezek 24:9b harks back to the parable itself and in a sense repeats part of 24:5, only now not in the imperative mood, addressing some unstated actor, but in the indicative of Yahweh himself assuming the role of cook. First of all, he sees to it that there is sufficient firewood to make an extremely hot fire. The word “pyre” here (מְדוּרָה) is a noun derivative of the verb רּוּר in 24:5, “pile up [the logs].” (CC)

**24:10-11** For all their obscurities (see the textual notes), the gist of these verses seems reasonably clear. God directs the process, step by step, until all the filthy contents of the pot (and perhaps the pot itself) have been consumed in the fire. The language basically continues the metaphor, but words like טֻמְאָה, “uncleanness,” and חֶלְאָה, “filth” (24:11), readily assume moral and theological overtones, which, of course, is the point of it all. (CC)

**24:11** *empty pot.* Jerusalem, emptied of inhabitants, would be set to the torch, in a vain final effort at purification. (CSB)

**24:12** The verse is difficult but seems to say that since milder, less drastic means of cleansing the pot have proven ineffective, no alternative remained but to use the extreme measures pictured. Ezek 24:13 will repeat the thought but will abandon the picture to speak to the actual historical situation. (CC)

**24:13** *lewdness.* See 16:27; 22:9. (CSB)

Most of this verse is dominated by the verb טָהַר, whose Piel (once here) means “cleanse,” and whose Qal (twice here) means “become/be clean.” This verse has the first appearance of the Piel of this verb in Ezekiel, and Yahweh’s use of it for Israel virtually has to be translated as “I *tried to* cleanse you.” By his own repeated testimony, Israel had been unclean and depraved from birth (16:3–5; cf. Ps 51:5) and had never come clean in admitting its guilt, repenting, and changing its ways. (CC)

Exactly what does Yahweh mean when he speaks of his earlier attempts at cleansing his people? There are quite a number of possibilities, and perhaps it is a matter of the accumulation of all of them. The covenant of Moses included the sacrificial and liturgical cultus in Leviticus with its distinction between holy and profane, clean and unclean, which was provided by Yahweh to justify, sanctify, and cleanse his people. Here Israel’s failure to be cleansed may be considered a fulfillment of the picture in Lev 26:14–35, which depicts Yahweh’s graduated futile chastisements on the people in an attempt to forestall their final judgment. The Bible records judgment after preliminary judgment in attempts to remind Israel of the exodus and Sinai events and all that followed from them, including Yahweh’s provision of sanctifying worship at the tabernacle and temple. (CC)

Yahweh probably also intends to refer to his repeated threats and promises communicated through the prophets. Contemporary to this period of Ezekiel’s ministry are the prophecies of Jeremiah in Jer 25:3–4 and 26:5, which speak in this vein. Especially 2 Chr 36:15–17, a little meditation on the fall of Jerusalem, may echo Ezekiel’s oracle here. Jesus will speak similarly in Mt 23:37 (|| Lk 13:34) and elsewhere, as will St. Stephen before his martyrdom (Acts 7, especially 7:51–53). “The hound of heaven” never ceases to pursue the lost and straying, but (mixing metaphors) the time comes when the door is shut (Mt 25:10). It is not in principle different for groups of believers as for individuals: “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27 KJV)(CC)

That is precisely the point we hear in the final clause of the verse: “you will not be clean again from your impurity until I have satisfied my wrath upon you.” For “satisfy wrath,” see the third textual note and the commentary on 5:13, where Yahweh used the same vocabulary. (CC)

But if we read 24:13 (and 5:13) closely, we note a hint of Gospel rebirth in the words. The clear implication is that once God’s righteous wrath is satisfied, he *will* make another attempt to cleanse his people—and succeed. The message is not one of total annihilation. This is not yet the time for Ezekiel to elaborate on the Gospel promise to a remnant (expounded in chapters 33–48), but it must be borne in mind as we read the next verse’s final threat, the fire of judgment which the people must first experience. This judgment will come two and a half years hence, in the burning of Jerusalem in summer 586 b.c., a portent of the fiery baptism that Jesus Christ will undergo on the cross (Lk 12:49–50). There God’s righteous wrath at humanity’s sin will be fully satisfied, and God will reconstitute his new, cleansed Israel consisting of all in Christ (e.g., Gal 6:16). (CC)

**24:14** Chapters 1–24 of Ezekiel consist almost exclusively of judgment oracles against Israel. Since 24:1–14 is, in effect, the last of these oracles, it closes appropriately with about as strong an assertion of the certainty of imminent judgment as is imaginable. With seven verbs signifying completeness—three of them assertions, then three negated verbs, and a final one another assertion—the bell tolls, as it were, announcing the death of the city, the close of an era. This verse begins with the self-identification of the speaker, “I, Yahweh, have spoken,” and closes with the signatory formula, “says the Lord Yahweh.” These phrases underscore all that the sacred name “Yahweh” carries with it, the God who had revealed himself to the chosen people as a God of covenant grace and promise, but also a God of zeal and justice. With him they had trifled, and him they finally mocked by their contumacy, so “the Day of Yahweh” (13:5; see also chapter 7) must be a “day of wrath” (Zeph 1:15), and it is just around the corner. (CC)

*Ezekiel’s Wife Dies*

**15 The word of the LORD came to me:  16 “Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears.  17 Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover the lower part of your face or eat the customary food of mourners.” 18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did as I had been commanded. 19 Then the people asked me, “Won’t you tell us what these things have to do with us?” 20 So I said to them, “The word of the LORD came to me:  21 Say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword.  22 And you will do as I have done. You will not cover the lower part of your face or eat the customary food of mourners.  23 You will keep your turbans on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep but will waste away because of your sins and groan among yourselves.  24 Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.’ 25 “And you, son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes, their heart’s desire, and their sons and daughters as well—  26 on that day a fugitive will come to tell you the news.  27 At that time your mouth will be opened; you will speak with him and will no longer be silent. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD.”**

**24:15-16 T**he appearance in 24:15–16 of the word-event formula, “the Word of Yahweh came to me,” and the use of “son of man” (24:16) indicate that, for all practical purposes, a new chapter begins here. The message is still doom but is communicated now primarily by an action prophecy rather than through an ordinary oracle or sermon. The passage is undated, but according to the apparent sense of 24:18, the initial revelation of the impending death of Ezekiel’s wife came on the evening of the same day—the day of the beginning of Jerusalem’s blockade (24:1–2). That morning Ezekiel had preached to the people (24:18), and presumably his sermon consisted of the prophecy of 24:3–14 and the substance of 24:16–17. Later that day came the word concerning his wife’s death, then the following morning the discussion with the people about his strange behavior (24:18b–24). Ezek 24:25–27 is a distinct message, also undated. It may have come the same day as 24:1–17, or perhaps at some later date in the middle of the siege, though it is a fitting conclusion for this chapter. (CC)

**24:16** *blow.* Some swiftly fatal disease, one that often reached plague proportions (see Ex 9:14; Nu 14:37). (CSB)

*delight of your eyes.*† The object of loving attention (see vv. 21, 25). (CSB)

It is customary, but appropriate, to digress here and note that this is one of the very few times where we get even a glimpse of Ezekiel’s personal life. Generally, his apparently harsh and unyielding exterior, his zeal for the truth and the honor of God’s holy name all but conceal the person behind them. Even here, Yahweh makes plain that the prophet’s personal feelings are beside the point. But we do at least learn that he had a wife, who probably accompanied him into exile almost nine years earlier in 597 b.c. and whom he regarded as the “desire/delight of [his] eyes” (24:16). Indirectly, of course, one can infer a little more of Ezekiel’s wide learning and interests from other parts of the book, but it is all indirect. (CC)

Implicit in Ezek 24:16–24 is the biblical motif of Yahweh as the Husband of his people, his wife. Just as the prophet Ezekiel embodies Yahweh, so Ezekiel’s wife represents Jerusalem, and her demise is correlated with that of the city. Ezekiel had developed the marriage motif of Yahweh and his wives in chapters 16 and 23, there tragically needing to stress the people’s whoring. However, unlike whoring Israel and Hosea’s adulterous wife (Hosea 1–3), nowhere does Yahweh indicate that Ezekiel’s wife was guilty of any moral infraction that precipitated her death. The marriage motif that plays out tragically here will be developed positively at length in the NT in terms of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom and his church as his virgin bride—a betrothal that has abundant implications for Christian family relationships and marriages (e.g., Eph 5:21–33). (CC)

**24:17** *Keep your turban fastened.* The mourner normally removed it and put dust on his head (see Jos 7:6; 1Sa 4:12). (CSB)

*sandals on your feet.* To remove them showed grief (see 2Sa 15:30). (CSB)

*cover … face.* A gesture of shame (Mic 3:7) or uncleanness (Lev 13:45). (CSB)

*food (of mourners).* The funeral meal (see Jer 16:7). (CSB)

In general, Ezekiel’s action prophecies are relatively typical of the genre by being dramatized or acted out. That remains true of his avoidance of the customary behaviors and rituals of mourning, as prescribed in this verse. These actions generally were socially much more rigid and prescribed in traditional societies such as Israel and other societies in antiquity. Even so thoroughly non-traditional a culture as ours has not completely dropped a variety of mourning customs. (CC)

**24:18** We are not told what the prophet spoke to the people about on the first morning, but presumably he preached to them 24:1–14 and also reported 24:16–17. Since those verses do not specify who or what “the desire of [his] eyes” (24:16) was, it is easy to picture the people paying scant attention to what seemed to be merely some more strange talk by the prophet. What the phrase meant will become clear very shortly in 24:18, conceivably for the first time to the prophet himself. If one misreads the first clause of 24:18 (“so I spoke to the people that morning”) as referring to the explanation in 24:21–24, given the morning after Ezekiel’s wife died, all kinds of questions about the text and the actual sequence of events ensue. As the text stands, the people take note only when the prophet’s wife dies and then, the next morning, Ezekiel fails to observe the usual conventions of mourning. (CC)

**24:19** *Then the people asked me.* The third time that the people responded to Ezekiel’s behavior (see 12:9; 21:7). (CSB)

Not surprisingly, the people surmise that such weird behavior must have some significance. It is surely no accident that they do not merely ask about the sign’s meaning in general, but what it means “*for us*.” God has providentially caused them to accord the prophet more respect than ever before. God has disposed them to actually listen to his message more intently than on any earlier occasion, at least so far as we can tell (contrast 12:27; 20:49). (CC)

**24:21** *desecrate.* By letting Nebuchadnezzar burn it down. (CSB)

The gravity of the message contained in the answer is underscored by introducing it with a triad of prophetic formulae, two of which (“the Word of Yahweh came to me” and “thus says the Lord Yahweh”) emphasize the divine origin of the reply. The answer is as blunt as it is devastating. (CC)

The substance of the reply is contained in the verb and the first part of its compound object: “I am about to desecrate my sanctuary.” (“Sanctuary” is followed by three appositives to it, then the final clause about the people’s children.) Yahweh himself will desecrate or profane, that is, render unholy what had been his earthly holy place par excellence, his “sanctuary.” To “desecrate” something is a far stronger expression than “take away” in 24:16, which 24:21 explains. For all practical purposes, the people themselves had already accomplished this desecration by their various syncretistic or outright pagan rites and subsequent behavior (see especially chapter 8), as Yahweh already said (5:11; 23:38–39). But as long as God’s “Glory” (כָּבוֹד) remained “incarnate” there (Christologically), the sanctuary was sanctified by the divine presence and could potentially mediate Yahweh’s own holiness through the forgiveness of sins provided through the OT “sacraments” (sacrifices). But when Yahweh removed his Glory (11:22–23), the temple became only another meaningless structure of wood and stone. The historical reference of 24:21 is, of course, the temple’s destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in summer 586 b.c., but the prophet’s concern is with suprahistory, “*His*tory,” the event’s significance amid the history of salvation.

The first appositive, summarizing why the temple had become the opposite of Yahweh’s intent, is, literally, “the pride of your strength.” The phrase undoubtedly derives from Lev 26:19, where the reference is to pride and glorying in human power in general. But here עֹז, “strength,” is not abstract as much as it is concrete: the people’s false objectification of the temple as a stronghold. In Ps 78:61 “strength” and “glory” focus even more closely on the ark, above which Yahweh sat enthroned between the wings of the cherubim; his presence there was the focal point of the entire temple structure and all its rites. Similarly, in Ps 132:8 the entire building is termed “your mighty ark.”

The problem, to which Ezekiel has alluded many times before, was that the people had come to regard the temple as a bit of magic, a talisman that should retain its power to protect them apart from faith and a life of faith. Isaiah taught the inviolability of Zion, that the city would play a central role in God’s economy of salvation because of God’s election and promise, as indeed it did as this promise was fulfilled in Christ’s first advent. However, that teaching had become confused with the idea of the inviolability of the earthly city of Jerusalem, whether or not its people remained faithful (and they did not). God’s promise that he would graciously “dwell” (שָׁכַן) there in the midst of his people (e.g., Ex 25:8; 29:45; Is 8:18) was an essential and oft-repeated component of the theology of Zion, but it was not irrevocable. In the fullness of time, God’s Glory came to tabernacle (dwell permanently and irrevocably) in Jesus, the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14). The earthly temple, again desecrated by the people’s infidelity and henceforth irrelevant to God’s plan of salvation, was razed in a.d. 70, never to be rebuilt. The eschatological restoration of the new Jerusalem is the subject of Ezekiel 40–48 (with a temple) and Revelation 21–22 (without one). (CC)

More than a century before Ezekiel, Micah (3:11) had pinpointed the problem: in spite of all their malfeasance, “on Yahweh they lean, saying, ‘Is not Yahweh in our midst? No harm can come upon us.’ ” And more or less contemporaneously with Ezekiel, Jeremiah had nearly been lynched after preaching his “temple sermon” (Jeremiah 7). See especially Jer 7:4, where he condemns the people’s repetition of the mantra of “lying words: ‘This is the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh.’ ” Jeremiah 26 is a parallel chapter detailing the circumstances accompanying the sermon. (CC)

“The desire of your eyes” (Ezek 24:21) obviously parallels Yahweh’s description of Ezekiel’s fondness for his wife (24:16). A parallel expression in Is 64:11 uses the same noun (מַחְמַד) as in Ezek 24:16, 21: the people call the temple “all our desirable things.” Their affection for the temple was not objectionable per se, but they had made a building and an institution into ends in themselves rather than revering them as Yahweh’s chosen means to an end. (CC)

The final appositional phrase, “the yearning of your hearts” (24:21), is perhaps a slight intensification of the preceding phrase, possibly expressing the people’s anxiety because of their banishment from the temple, which will shortly be taken away from them. (CC)

The typology of Zion should be obvious, but it should not be taken for granted. Fulfilled in Christ, the incarnate temple, God continues through the Holy Spirit to employ temples, not only in the bodies of the baptized (1 Cor 6:19), where much of Protestantism would confine him, but also in congregations, many of them named “Zion” (cf. Heb 12:22), where his Word is preached faithfully and the Sacraments administered rightly, until the day of the new Jerusalem, where there will be no need of temples of any sort (Rev 21:22). In the meantime, the temptation is perennially present to confuse means and end, as ancient Israel had done. (CC)

**24:22-23** For a moment, Ezekiel uses the first person (“you will do as *I* have done”), making unmistakable that his behavior, which the people have just witnessed at the death of his wife, will be duplicated by them when they will shortly be stunned by the news of Jerusalem’s fall. (CC)

The clause “you will … *pine awaybecause of/in* your *iniquities*” (24:23) has been used before, once in Lev 26:39 in a covenant curse for when the people would prove unfaithful, and by Ezekiel earlier in 4:17, there of the Israelites’ physical starvation while Jerusalem is under siege. Here it is more of a spiritual and psychological destitution as each person sorrows silently. The picture is of overwhelming grief that no tears or lamentation can express adequately, with only an inner pain on account of the sins that had brought things to such a pass. The prophet’s own silent groaning (24:17) will be paralleled by the people’s inarticulate, unritualized expression of bereavement beyond words. (CC)

The verb “*groan* to one another” (נָהַם, 24:23, different from the verb for “groan” in 24:17) occurs only here in Ezekiel, but is used elsewhere in Is 5:29–30 for the roar of an attacking army compared to the roar of lions and the roar of ocean breakers (see also Prov 19:12; 20:2; 28:15). Here “groan” expresses that the people will try to reach out to console one another but lack the words to do so. (CC)

**24:24** *Ezekiel.* The prophet speaks of himself in the third person. Elsewhere his name occurs only in 1:3. (CSB)

*sign.* See note on 12:6. (CSB)

Now Yahweh speaks again and affirms what Ezekiel has just said. He even identifies the prophet by name, the only time Ezekiel’s name appears in the book besides 1:3. The loaded word מוֹפֵת, “sign, portent, type,” had been used in 12:6, 11 and will be repeated in 24:27, the only four times the word appears in the book. The word has various connotations. It is often paralleled with אֹות, “sign” (e.g., Ex 7:3; Is 8:18). It can also be a synonym of פֶּלֶא, “wonder, miracle” (e.g., Is 9:6; Ps 77:11, 14), implying something supernatural. That force is probably in the background here, in the sense that Ezekiel’s behavior predicts the people’s future. “Type” might work, not primarily in the theological sense, but in the sense of model, exemplar, prefigurement. In its context here, perhaps “action prophecy” could be used. The people would recognize that his had not been idle, meaningless gestures, but divine revelation intended to move them to repentance and faith. (CC)

**25:25-27** These three verses, really a climactic and separate section of the chapter, are set apart by a new address to the prophet from Yahweh. At the same time there are many links with the preceding verses. One spots the repetition of the pregnant מוֹפֵת, “sign,” for Ezekiel himself in 24:27 as in 24:24. (CC)

Ezek 24:25 is linked with the preceding in various ways. The use of לָקַח in 24:25 (בְּי֨וֹם קַחְתִּ֤י), “on the day when *I take away* from them their stronghold,” harks back to Yahweh’s use of the same verb (הִנְנִ֨י לֹקֵ֧חַ) for the removal of Ezekiel’s wife in 24:16: “*I am taking away* from you the desire of your eyes.” And 24:25 is in many ways simply a restatement of 24:21, where Yahweh used the same construction as in 24:16 but with the devastating חִלֵּל instead of לָקַח, “*I am about to desecrate* [הִנְנִ֨י מְחַלֵּ֤ל] my sanctuary.” (CC)

Looking forward, “*on the day when* [בְּי֨וֹם] I take away” in 24:25 anticipates “*on that day* [בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא]” in both 24:26 and 24:27. On its surface that seems to imply that the “survivor” (24:26–27) would arrive in Babylon on the very day that Jerusalem fell—something not humanly possible, and conflicting with 33:21, which dates the survivor’s arrival about six months later than the city’s fall in summer 586 b.c. There are various ways out of the dilemma, however. The phrase בְּיוֹם frequently means simply “when(ever),” that is, with no concentration on a *day*, as such, but “at that time” (as NIV boldly renders it in 24:27), sometime in the future, undefined as to onset or length. (CC)

Furthermore, the accent is not so much on the calendar date of Jerusalem’s fall, as such, as on the day when the news reached the exiles; at that time the past event would become history for them (cf. “what these things [mean] for us” in 24:19). The six-month interval of time that it took the survivor to travel from conquered Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon is passed over, or the conquest of Jerusalem and the survivor’s arrival in Babylon are telescoped together, in order to stress the inner connection between those two occasions and the end of Ezekiel’s speechlessness. (CC)

**24:26** *fugitive.* The first of the exiles of 586 b.c. (CSB)

*news.* About the siege—its beginning (verifying the accuracy of vv. 1–2) and its ending (see note on 33:21). (CSB)

**24:27** *no longer be silent.* Ezekiel’s wife died the same day the temple was burned (Aug. 14, 586 b.c.; see 2Ki 25:8–9). See notes on 3:26; 33:21. (CSB)

*sign.* See note on 12:6. (CSB)