

Ezekiel 4-7 • Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Chs 4–7 recount Ezekiel’s first years of ministry among the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

False prophets both back home in Jerusalem and there in the Jewish colony of Tel Aviv in Babylon continued to peddle what Bible students today call “701 theology.”

What 701 Theology?

In the late 8th Century BC, after laying waste to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the Assyrians marched south and laid siege to Jerusalem during the reign of the good king Hezekiah.

God miraculously broke the siege and Jerusalem escaped destruction in 701 BC.

Now, a little over a hundred years later, in a highly similar situation w/the Babylonians, false prophets told the Jews God would again come to their rescue.

The problem is, ***no He wouldn’t.***

God rescued them from the Assyrians in 701 because they repented & turned back to Him.

They weren’t doing that now, and the Babylonians weren’t an adversary to run away.

On the contrary, they were the instrument of judgment God had brought to them.

The prophet Jeremiah in Jerusalem had ***already sent a letter*** to the exiles, telling them not to listen to the lying words of the false prophets.

But they rejected Jeremiah’s message in favor of the more appealing 701 Theology.

They clung to the hope their captivity would be short and they’d been on the way home soon.

Back in Jerusalem, King Zedekiah ruled as vassal to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

The year before Ezekiel’s call to be a prophet, Zedekiah hosted a conference of representatives from neighboring countries that were also vassals of Babylon.

They plotted to coordinate a rebellion against Babylon even though Jeremiah steadfastly urged him not to resist the Babylonians.

God would NOT rescue them if they rebelled.

On the contrary, the enemy would come in fury & ***level*** the city; which is exactly what happened.

While Jeremiah announced judgment in Jerusalem, Ezekiel was doing the same among the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

Ch. 4

Ezekiel is told to act out the siege of Jerusalem that’s about to happen.

¹ “You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem.

The Babylonians used clay tablets for writing.

While still soft, they pressed a stylus into them to make letters & drawings.

So Ezekiel draws a city on one; it represents Jerusalem.

² 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.

He’s to make a model of Jerusalem being besieged.

³ Moreover take for yourself an iron plate,

Like a ***griddle***; something they’d cook flatbread on.

and set it *as* an iron wall between you and the city. 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 probably represent the ***unbreakable nature*** of the siege the Babylonians will set.

Now God tells Ezekiel to do something that’s tied commentators in fits.

⁴ “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. ⁵ For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, 390 days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. ⁶ And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah 40 days. I have laid on you a day for each year.

Only 1 thing is clear, each ***day*** of this object lesson he enacted represented a year.

As he lay on his left side, it represented the Northern Kingdom of Israel’s sin, and the 40 days on his right was Judah’s sin.

Suggestions for how to **interpret** the 390 & 40 days or 430 years, are all over the place.

Let me share what seems to me the most reasonable.

In Ezekiel, all dating is marked from 1:1&2 & the captivity of King Jehoiachin in 597 BC.

430 years later is 167 BC, the year of the Maccabean Revolt that liberated Jerusalem from foreign domination for the first time since the Babylonians and made them a truly independent Jewish state once more.

Ezekiel laid on his left side for Israel almost 10 times longer than his right for Judah because Israel's sins were much worse & had gone on for far longer than Judah's.

Again – we can't be sure is that's how we're to understand this object lesson, but of all the explanations, that's seems to me the most likely.

⁷ “Therefore you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem; your arm *shall be* uncovered, and you shall prophesy against it.

A bare arm was a sign of hostility. Soldiers **rolled up their sleeves**, if you will, as they prepared to go into battle.

Diplomats & ambassadors wore **long sleeves** and if your arm was **covered**, it meant **peace**.

But a bare arm meant it was time for war.

⁸ 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.

What Ezekiel was being told to do by God in this prophetic & **protracted** object lesson was difficult.

We probably shouldn't think he laid in 1 position w/o moving for over a year, then rolled over for another a little over a month.

He had to get up occasionally for other matters.

But the bulk of this nearly say year and 3 months was spent laying on his side.

God **assisted** Ezekiel in being able to take this posture for an extended time.

That phrase “**I will restrain you**” is literally “**I will put ropes on you**” and ought to be taken **figuratively**; God will **give Ezekiel the physical ability** to do this as His messenger to the exiles.

⁹ “Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt;

Spelt is a kind of wheat used in the ancient world but dropped in the Middle Ages.

Health food aficionados have started using spelt again in recent times.

Ezekiel was to take these 6 ingredients &

put them into 1 vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. *During* the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it. ¹⁰ And your food which you eat *shall be* by weight, 20 shekels a day; from time to time

you shall eat it. ¹¹ You shall also drink water by measure, 1/6th of a hin; from time to time you shall drink.

This was rationing & represented the impoverished nature of the Jewish people during the years they chaffed under foreign oppression.

His rations came to 8 oz of bread & a pint of water.

He lived on this for the entire time he laid on his side.

Surely he lost weight, but remember he was forced into a pretty sedentary lifestyle during this time, so he wasn't burning many calories.

This bread sustained him throughout the time.

So, there've been many who've attempted to make bread from this recipe, claiming its health benefits.

What they **don't** suggest is that while eating it you should lie on your side for over a year.

There's another aspect of the recipe modern bakers don't follow . . .

¹² And you shall eat it *as* barley cakes;

Small loafs

and bake it using fuel of human waste in their sight.”

Dry out your dung & cook w/that – because w/all the fiber you'll be eating – well, you'll be regular & it'll burn great!

[Ezekiel bread – Cinnamon Raisin, Sesame,]
I sure hope modern Ezekiel bread isn't baked *this* way.

¹³ Then the Lord said, “So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, where I will drive them.” ¹⁴ 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.” Eating bread cooked this way was unclean & Ezekiel objected since doing so would defile him.

How could he then serve as a prophet?

¹⁵ Then He said to me, “See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it.” 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, ¹⁷ that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity.

All of this was to portray to the exiles the horrors of what would befall Jerusalem in the coming siege, which last 2½ years!

The famine would be so intense, the cattle would be gone, so there'd be no fuel to cook their bread and would have to cook it using human waste.

When Ezekiel balked at being THAT accurate in his object lesson, God honored his desire to remain ritually clean and told him he'd be allowed to use cow dung to cook with – but the people holed up in Jerusalem wouldn't be so fortunate.

Ch. 5

¹ “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.

Men of the commoner class kept their hair covering their ears, & grew beards because it was ***universally considered manly***.

Only certain people shaved their head to mark them as holding a distinct office; like a pagan priest or a royal official.

The only time common men of the Middle East shaved was as a sign of mourning.

The mourning Ezekiel is called to do here is over the death of the Kingdom of Judah.

² You shall burn with fire 1/3rd in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take 1/3rd and strike around *it* with the sword, and 1/3rd you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. ³ You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your *garment*. ⁴ 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.

The strands of his hair represented the people of Jerusalem.

A 1/3rd would be killed in battle, another 1/3rd would be consumed in the siege, the last 1/3rd were scattered as refugees.

The few tucked away in Ezekiel's garment were the exiles in Babylon.

But even some of them would be killed off as they ran afoul of their oppressors, which is exactly what happened to some of the exiles who listened to the false prophets & tried to raise an insurrection.

Now – lest there be any doubt all of this was prophetic of Jerusalem, God makes it clear

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. ⁶ 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.’ ⁷ 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’ — ⁸ 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. 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.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ ‘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. 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. ¹³ ‘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.

And that’s precisely what happened!

Though the false prophets claimed God would come through and rescue them out of the Babylonian grip, deliverance didn’t come and Jerusalem fell.

The entire land of Israel was left largely a desolate ruin for the next 300 years.

A small group of Jews returned after 70 years of exile and rebuilt Jerusalem but the other cities were at best little better than ghost towns for generations.

And the entire time, others ruled them.

After Babylon the Persians ruled.

The Egyptians came up and made a grab for the region every now and then.

Then the Greeks came under Alexander.

When he died, Israel became the battle ground between the Ptolemys in Egypt & the Seleucids in Syria. It was then that the Maccabees rebelled against the Seleucids and managed for the first time in 400 years to gain Jewish independence.

That entire 4 centuries was a time of great distress for the Jewish people.

And their leaders slowly came to realize all that happened to them was the **result** of their gross negligence in following God.

They realized how far they’d gone from Him and ignored His Word.

So they set themselves to make God’s Word the heart & Center of what it means to BE Jewish.

It’s this that formed the core of so much of what followed in Israel’s history.

This devotion to the Lord & His Word gave rise to the synagogue, to the Pharisees, and even to the more modern Hasidic or Ultra-Orthodox movement.

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ ‘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.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.’ ”

The 4 scourges mentioned here; plague, famine, wild beasts & war, are repeated throughout the book.

Make a mental note of this because we’ll see it in an interesting place later.

As we mentioned when studying both Isaiah & Jeremiah—It was God’s plan to reveal Himself first to Israel & the Jewish people, then use them as a missionary nation to the rest of the world.

Either they would be willing partners & shared the truth of God by the blessing He poured on them, or if they rebelled, they would be a witness of His judgment.

One way or another, the world would learn of Him thru them.

He says that here – the nations would be stunned by Jerusalem’s fall and know it came **because** they turned their back on Him.

Ch. 6

In this ch. God tells Ezekiel to prophecy against the **land** of Israel, specifically, the **hills**.

It was there that people set up idols & built altars. Offering sacrifices to their many gods.

Some of these sacrifices were human and the practices they engaged in around the altars were too abominable to describe.

So God says He’s going to judge the land that’s defiled by their hideous debauchery & stained by the

blood of the innocent.

¹ Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ² “Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ³ 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. ⁴ Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols. ⁵ And I will lay the corpses of the children of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones all around your altars. ⁶ 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. ⁷ The slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I *am* the Lord. 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. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ And they shall know that I *am* the Lord; I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them.”
Yet again God foretells the day when the remnant that survives realizes all that’s happened to their people was God’s judgment for the atrocious way they’d rebelled against Him.

Then they will turn back to Him and He will restore them.

¹¹ ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Pound your fists and stamp your feet, “Go pound sand.”

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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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 they were blithely worshipping their idols and burnt sweet incense, oh the smell was so good.

Soon the smell emanating from the same places will be the stench of death.

¹⁴ 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.

Think ***Blythe*** or ***Needles*** or if you know the spot – ***Chiriaco Summit*** out in the desert on I10. Then they shall know that I *am* the Lord.”

Ch. 7

This is more of the same as Ezekiel says all that’s been warned in the destruction of Judah & Jerusalem has now come.

It’s ***Show Time!***

¹ Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “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. ³ 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.

Vs. 4-11 keep hammering the same point: The end has come and there’s no escape.

¹² The time has come, The day draws near. ‘Let not the buyer rejoice, Nor the seller mourn, For wrath *is* on their whole multitude. ¹³ 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.

Throughout history, in times of war & civil unrest, there’s almost always one group that’s remains immune to

trouble—The super-rich & powerful.

In fact, many of these times of unrest are **caused** by them to manipulate markets & **increase** their wealth & power.

But occasionally, the trouble is so great & far reaching, even these elites are caught up & brought low.

When the famine began in Jerusalem, the first to die were the poor because they lived hand to mouth and had not stores of food set aside.

The middle class lasted longer but a 2½ year siege meant many of them died of starvation and plague due to the disease caused by massive death & decay.

The ones who survived longest were the rich who managed to store food and protect their stores & stay safe behind their high walls.

But eventually, even they ate through their provisions.

Or the starving broke into their homes & took it from them.

In Rev. 6, we read of the 4 horsemen of the Tribulation who bring massive unrest & death to planet earth.

John says in v. 8 -

Power was given to them over a 1/4th of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

Interesting. These are the same 4 methods of death Ezekiel repeatedly refers to in the Judgment of Jerusalem.

In the Tribulation, they will consume a quarter of the world's population.

Right now about a little over 7 billion 1 Billion, 750 million.

That's all 1.3 billion in China, all Russia & the entire US.

But what's interesting in these early judgments of the Tribulation, is that it says in v. 6 that while there's a famine for the poor, there will be plenty of luxury items for those who can afford them.

It isn't till later on the judgments of God hammer all, regardless of social status or wealth.

When the **sun flares** & burns all flesh, doesn't matter if you're driving a **Maserati** or a **Yugo**.

¹⁴ 'They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, But no one goes to battle; For My wrath *is* on all their multitude. ¹⁵ The sword *is* outside, And the pestilence and famine within. Whoever *is* in the field Will die by the sword; And whoever *is* in the city, Famine and pestilence will devour him. ¹⁶ 'Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains Like doves of the valleys, All of them mourning, Each for his iniquity.

Now – watch this

¹⁷ Every hand will be feeble, and every knee will be *as weak as* water.

Gym rats & power lifters will have no advantage.

¹⁸ They will also be girded with sackcloth; Horror will cover them; Shame *will be* on every face, Baldness on all their heads.

Those who thought life was all about fashion; what labels you wear, what makeup you use & how you apply it, where you have your hair styled – these people will realize how pathetically out of touch with reality they'd been their entire lives.

The stress they've lived under during the siege is so great their hair has **fallen out!**

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.

They lived for wealth, thinking the one with the most gold & silver in the end wins.

But when the food's gone and simply CAN'T be bought, what good will their yellow & gray colored metal do for them then?

I know I'm opening a can of worms here but that's what I do.

If you watch TV or listen to the radio especially what bill themselves as conservative networks & programs, you've heard endless pitches to buy silver & gold as an investment for the future.

While it's a mark of Biblical wisdom to have savings & invest wisely, Jesus also warns us about laying up treasure on Earth.

A prudent amount in savings is wise and each person needs to decide what that prudence means for them in light of their family & future.

But amassing wealth as a way to avoid dependence on God is sin.

Money that *sits and does nothing IS nothing*.

Money is only of value when it's put to work; when it's *used*.

Please hear me: Yes! A prudent amount set aside in savings is wise & commended in Proverbs.

But accumulating earthly treasure as a hedge against the NEED to trust in God is foolish & grieves the Spirit.

Jesus made this crystal when He said, Lay not up for yourselves treasure on Earth, where it's so easily lost. Instead, lay up treasure in heaven where it remains secure. [Mat 6:19-20]

The people God speaks of here had plenty of gold & silver, but what good did it do them in the end?

They would have given it all for a single loaf of bread.

²⁰ '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.

Fancy jewelry won't help when judgment comes.

In vs. 21-27 yet again, God tells the prophet, who repeats it verbatim to the people, that judgment will come & no one will escape.

Look at v. 26

²⁶ Disaster will come upon disaster, And rumor will be upon rumor.

For most of history it's a disaster followed by a period of recovery.

In fact, we learn that what looks like a disaster, end up being a kind of hard blessing.

Not so with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Disaster will follow disaster with not a shred of good news in sight.

But it's what Ezekiel says next that's truly troubling . . .

Then they will seek a vision from a prophet;

They'll be desperate for a word of hope; someone, anyone to give some guidance

But the law will perish from the priest, And counsel from the elders.

Those in authority won't have anything to say.

They have no advice to give, no direction for people to follow. **They're at their wits end.**

Priests drew their moral authority from God's Law.

But they'd long since abandoned God's Word & Law, so they had no credibility.

The elders were honored because they knew what to do.

Now their confused and see no way clear of the problems before them.

²⁷ 'The king will mourn,

The idea here is that instead of being out in public leading, he's shut himself up in private lamenting his fate.

The prince

And when you read that word "prince" think all of the hopes people have for the future – he's the future King – so everything's okay because we not only have a current ruler but he's got a replacement.

Well, now, the current king is hiding & crying like a little girl – so the Prince . . .

will be clothed with desolation,

The prince is dumb-struck. The throne he's to inherit has no future.

So

the hands of the common people will tremble.

When the leaders at all levels as we see here; priests, elders, king & prince, aren't leading & have no advice – nothing to say – the common people despair.

And when they despair, either they give up and sit down to wait out the end, or they decide to run amok, because if it's all going down the tubes, might as well grab what last good times you can.

Buy a keg, invite some friends over & party.

Let's all get dressed **up**, pass the bottle **round**, before we all fall **down**.

Here's why this distresses me tonight . . .

The loss of authority & wisdom on the part of leaders is a mark & measure of God's judgment.

As we look at not only our nation, but all of Western Civilization, we have to acknowledge the howling vacuum in principled, visionary leadership.

There are forces at work that are gutting our society of its soul.

The ravenous wolves of secular humanism are feasting on the dregs of a once Christian Worldview.

And while they systematically dismantle all that made our civilization great, there's NO ONE in either the religious or political sphere with the moral & spiritual authority to resist them.

Throughout Europe and the US, thousands of churches and pastors have forsaken God's Word in favor of the opinions of man.

In just the last 20 to 30 years we've watched the dismantling of the 2 main political parties and 1 of them has now become virtually irrelevant while the other has embraced godlessness.

Those in office are now far more concerned about building and keeping power and winning the political game than they are leading the nation INTO the future.

In truth—they've mortgaged our future and put us so far in debt the only solution is a whole new economic system – which positions us perfectly for the arrival of the antichrist.

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!"

We're walking in the very same footprints as Judah & Israel.

And just as there was no hope for the nation, but there *was* for individuals who'd repent & return to the Lord, *we* may be past the *national* point of no return too.

I hope & pray not – but that God would give grace & 1 last might outpouring of His Spirit before the Great & Terrible Day of the Lord the Bible tells us *is coming*.