

# CHAPTER 24

Here are two sermons in this chapter, preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from Mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from Mount Ebal, the mount of curses; both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem. The occasion of them was the king of Babylon's laying siege to Jerusalem, and the design of them is to show that in the issue of that siege he should be not only master of the place, but destroyer of it.

**I.** By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire are shown the miseries that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly, for her filthiness (v. 1-14).

**II.** By the sign of Ezekiel's not mourning for the death of his wife is shown that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented, so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair (v. 15-27).

## EZEKIEL 24:1-14

### THE PARABLE OF THE BOILING POT

We have here,

**I.** The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it (v. 2): “*Son of man, take notice, the king of Babylon, who is now abroad with his army, thou knowest not where, set himself against Jerusalem this same day.*” It was many miles, it was many days' journey, from Jerusalem to Babylon. Perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was that the design was upon Rabbath of the children of Ammon and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet, “*This day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army has sat down before it.*” Note, As all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God and under his view. He tells the prophet, that the prophet might tell the people, that so when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might

infer that, since he was right in his news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with Heaven.

**II.** The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter it in his book, *memorandum*, that *in the ninth year* of Jehoiachin's captivity (for thence Ezekiel dated, <sup><301></sup>Ezekiel 1:2, which was also the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiachin was carried off), in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, <sup><231></sup>2 Kings 25:1. See how God reveals things to his servants the prophets, especially those things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the date of remarkable occurrences, which may sometimes contribute to the manifesting of God's glory so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of scripture prophecies. *Known unto God are all his works.*

**III.** The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is that this siege of Jerusalem, now begun, will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he must say *to the rebellious house*, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those that were yet in their own land. A rebellious house will soon be a ruinous house.

**1.** He must show them this by a sign; for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a *boiling pot*. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before, when he first began to be a prophet, and probably was designed to put them in mind of that (<sup><211></sup>Jeremiah 1:13, *I see a seething pot, with the face towards the north*; and the explanation of it, v. 15, makes it to signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the *northern* nations); and, as this comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said (<sup><311></sup>Ezekiel 11:3), *This city is the caldron and we are the flesh*, meaning, "We are as safe here as if we were surrounded with walls of brass." "Well," says God, "it shall be so; you shall be boiled in Jerusalem, as the *flesh in the caldron*, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it (v. 4); let it be filled with the flesh of the *choice of the flock* (v. 5), with the choice pieces (v. 4), and the marrow-bones, and let the other bones serve for fuel, that, one way or other, either in the pot or under it, the whole beast may be made use of." A

fire of bones, though it be a slow fire (for the siege was to be long), is yet a sure and lasting fire; such was God's wrath against them, and not like the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, which has noise and blaze, but no intense heat. Those that from all parts of the country fled into Jerusalem for safety would be sadly disappointed when the siege laid to it would soon make the place too hot for them; and yet there was not getting out of it, but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a boiling pot.

**2.** He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be construed as a *woe to the bloody city*, v. 6. And again (v. 9), being *bloody*, let it *go to pot*, to be boiled; that is the fittest place for it. Let us here see,

**(1.)** What is the course God takes with it. Jerusalem, during the siege, is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry.

**[1.]** Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the closeness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers, and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them (v. 9): *I will make the pile for fire great*. Commission is given to the Chaldeans (v. 10) to *heap on wood, and kindle the fire*, to make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants. Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impenitent sinners shall never abate, much less go out, for want of fuel. *Tophet has fire and much wood*, ~~231B~~ Isaiah 30:33.

**[2.]** The meat, as it is boiled, is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. "*Consume the flesh*; let it be thoroughly boiled, boiled to rags. *Spice it well*, and make it savoury, for those that will feed sweetly upon it. *Let the bones be burnt*." either the bones *under* the pot ("let them be consumed with the other fuel") or, as some think, the bones *in* the pot — "let it boil so furiously that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened; let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be by sickness, sword, and famine, reduced to the extremity of misery." And then (v. 6), "*Bring it out piece by piece*; let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the sword or made a prisoner. Let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man does upon a good dish of meat when it is set before him. *Let no lot fall upon it*; every piece in the pot shall be fetched out and devoured, first or last, and therefore it is no matter for casting lots which shall be fetched out first." It was a very severe military execution when David measured Joab with *two lines to put to death and one full line to keep alive*, ~~110E~~ 2

Samuel 8:2. But here is no line, no lot of mercy, made use of; all goes one way, and that is to destruction.

[3.] When all the broth is boiled away the pot is set empty upon the coals, that it may burn too, which signifies the setting of the city on fire, v. 11. The scum of the meat, or (as some translate it) *the rust of the meat*, has so got into the pot that there is no making it clean by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the filthiness be burnt out of it, or, rather, *melted in it* and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.

(2.) What is the quarrel God has with it. He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with, for,

[1.] It is a bloody city (v. 7, 8): *Her blood is in the midst of her*. Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; nay, and they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in blood-shed, and so it is *in the midst of them*. Nay, they commit their murders in the face of the sun, and openly and impudently avow them, in defiance of the justice both of God and man. She did not *pour out* the blood she shed *upon the ground, to cover it with dust*, as being ashamed of the sin or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a filthy thing, proper to be concealed (<sup>GEN3</sup>Deuteronomy 23:13), much less dangerous. Nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed upon a rock, where it would not soak in, upon *the top of a rock*, in despite of divine views and vengeance. They shed innocent blood under colour of justice; so that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good service, so put it, as it were, *on the top of a rock*. Or it may refer to the sacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they *caused fury to come up and take vengeance*, v. 8. It could not be avoided but that God *must* in anger *visit for these things; his soul must be avenged on such a nation as this*. It is absolutely necessary that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine justice. And, the crime having been public and notorious, it is fit that the punishment should be so too: *I have set her blood on the top of a rock*. Jerusalem was to be made an example, and therefore was made a spectacle, to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. It is fit that those who *sin before all* should be *rebuked before all*; and that the reputation of

those should not be consulted by the concealment of their punishment who were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

[2.] It is a filthy city. Great notice is taken, in this explanation of the comparison, of the *scum of this pot*, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the pot *whose scum is therein* and has *not gone out of it*, v. 6. The *great scum* that *went not forth out of her* (v. 12), that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was *molten in it* (v. 11), some of this runs over *into the fire* (v. 12), inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiously, but *it shall all be consumed* at last, v. 11. When the hand of God had gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity, they grew more impudent and outrageous in sin, quarrelled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last degree against the Chaldeans, snarled at the stone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net. This as *their scum*; in their distress they *trespassed yet more against the Lord*, like *that king Ahaz*, ~~1482~~ 2 Chronicles 28:22. There is little hope of those who are made worse by that which should make them better, whose corruptions are excited and exasperated by those rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God which were designed for the suppressing and subduing of them, or of those whose scum boiled up once in convictions, and confessions of sin, as if it would be taken off by reformation, but afterwards returned again, in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again. This was Jerusalem's case: *She has wearied with lies*, wearied her God with purposes and promises of amendment, which she never stood to, wearied herself with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, v. 12. Note, Those that follow after lying vanities weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, v. 13, 14. Because she is incurably wicked she is abandoned to ruin, without remedy. *First*, Methods and means of reformation had been tried in vain (v. 13): "*In thy filthiness is lewdness; thou hast become obstinate and impudent in it; thou hast got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts. In thy filthiness thee is a rooted lewdness; as appears by this, I have purged thee and thou wast not purged. I have given thee medicine, but it has done thee no good. I have used the means of cleansing thee, but they have been ineffectual; the intention of them has not been answered.*" Note, It is sad to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all lost. *Secondly*, It is therefore

resolved that no more such methods shall be used: *Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more.* The fire shall no longer be a refining fire, but a consuming fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened, as it has been, but shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work. Note, Those that will not be healed are justly given up and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* Thirdly, Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin: *I will cause my fury to rest upon thee.* This is the same with what is said of the later Jews, that *wrath has come upon them to the uttermost,* <sup><3116></sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:16. They deserve it: *According to thy doings they shall judge thee,* v. 14. And God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was: *“I the Lord have spoken it, who am able to make good what I have spoken; it shall come to pass, nothing shall prevent it, for I will do it myself, I will not go back upon any entreaties; the decree has gone forth, and I will not spare in compassion to them, neither will I repent.”* He will neither change his mind nor his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to intercede for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it. Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he has given of favour to his people; and the case of such is sad indeed, who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be false or they must be damned.

## <sup><3115></sup> EZEKIEL 24:15-27

### THE DEATH OF THE PROPHET'S WIFE

These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, <sup><3117></sup> Ezekiel 33:21. He had assured them, in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here,

**I.** The sign by which this was represented to them, and it was a sign that cost the prophet very dear; the more shame for them that when he, by a divine appointment, was at such an expense to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it

**1.** He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprise to him (v. 16): *Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thy eyes with a stroke.* Note,

**(1.)** A married state may very well agree with the prophetic office; it is *honourable in all*, and therefore not sinful in ministers.

**(2.)** Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations. No doubt Ezekiel found a prudent tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity.

**(3.)** Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a *covering of the eyes* (<sup>4176</sup>Genesis 20:16), to restrain wandering looks after others; but a *desire of the eyes*, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the *desire of the eyes*, which find not any object more grateful.

**(4.)** That is least safe which is most dear; we know not how soon the desire of our eyes may be removed from us and may become the sorrow of our hearts, which is a good reason why those that *have wives* should be *as though they had none*, and those *who rejoice* in them *as though they rejoiced not*, <sup>4179</sup>1 Corinthians 7:29, 30. Death is a stroke which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from.

**(5.)** When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke we must see and own the hand of God in it: *I take away the desire of thy eyes.* He takes our creature-comforts from us when and how he pleases; he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them; and *may he not do what he will with his own?*

**(6.)** Under afflictions of this kind it is good for us to remember that we are *sons of men*; for so God calls the prophet here. If thou art a *son of Adam*, thy wife is a daughter of *Eve*, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to; and *shall the earth be forsaken for us?* According to this prediction, he tells us (v. 18), *I spoke unto the people in the morning*; for God sent his prophets, *rising up early*

and sending them; then he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe,

[1.] Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that.

[2.] We may the more easily bear an affliction if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep ourselves in the love of God.

2. He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the natural expressions of sorrow, v. 16. He must not give vent to his passion by *weeping*, or letting *his tears run down*, though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and, when the body is sown, it is fit that it should thus be watered. But Ezekiel is not allowed to do this, though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man and would perhaps be ill thought of by the people if he did it not. Much less might he use the customary formalities of mourners. He must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the *tire of his head*, must *put on his shoes*, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not *cover his lips*, not throw a veil over his face (as mourners were wont to do, <sup><0135></sup>Leviticus 13:45), must not be of a *sorrowful countenance*, *appearing unto men to fast*, <sup><0138></sup>Matthew 6:18. He must not *eat the bread of men*, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat for themselves; but, if it were sent, he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be greatly against the grain to flesh and blood not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly, but so God commands; and *I did in the morning as I was commanded*. He appeared in public, in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do, without any signs of mourning.

(1.) Here there was something peculiar, and Ezekiel, to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions, and his command must be obeyed even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us.



(2.) Though mourning for the dead be a duty, yet it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not *sorrow as those that have no hope*, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had lost our God, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and, of this moderation in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to be examples. We must at such a time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job *to bless the name of the Lord* even when he takes as well as when he gives.

II. The explication and application of this sign. The people enquired the meaning of it (v. 19): *Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us that thou doest so?* They knew that Ezekiel was an affectionate husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it but for some good reason and for instruction to them; and perhaps they were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and gave them an intimation that God would now comfort them again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again. Note, When we are enquiring concerning the things of God our enquiry must be, “What are those things *to us*? What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort, do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case?” Ezekiel gives them an answer *verbatim* — *word for word* as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must *speak to the house of Israel*.

1. Let them know that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, v. 21. If this was *done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence God showed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose that Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people? No, it is determined: *God will take away the desire of your eyes*. Note, The removal of the comforts of others should awaken us to think of parting with ours too; for *are we better than they?* We know not how soon the same cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with

those that weep, as being ourselves also in the body. God will *take away that which their soul pities*, that is, of which they say, What a pity is it that it should be cut off and destroyed! That *for which your souls are afraid* (so some read it); you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that?

**(1.)** That which was their public pride, the temple: “*I will profane my sanctuary*, by giving that into the enemy's hand, to be plundered and burnt.” This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and more *the desire of our eyes*, than any creature-comfort whatsoever. Christ's church, that is his spouse, should be ours too. Though this people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called *the desire of their eyes*. Note, Many that are destitute of *the power of godliness* are yet very fond of *the form* of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too. The sanctuary is here called the *excellency of their strength*; they had many strong-holds and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all. It was the *pride of their strength*; they prided in it as their strength that they were *the temple of the Lord*, <sup><2406></sup>Jeremiah 7:4. Note, The church-privileges that men are proud of are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away,

**(2.)** That which was their family-pleasure, which they looked upon with delight: “*Your sons and your daughters* (which are the dearer to you because they are but few left of many, the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall *fall by the sword* of the Chaldeans.” What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures, of themselves, whom they had taken such care and pains to bring up, and whom they loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this, was the punishment of sin.

**2.** Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, *You shall do as I have done*, v. 22. *You shall not mourn nor weep*, v. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men *shall not lament for the dead nor cut themselves* (<sup><2406></sup>Jeremiah 16:6); not that there shall be any such merciful circumstance without, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace within, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow; but they *shall not mourn*, for,

(1.) Their grief shall be so great that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it; their passions shall stifle them, and they shall have no power to ease themselves by giving vent to it.

(2.) Their calamities shall come so fast upon them, one upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be *hardened in their sorrows* (~~300~~ Job 6:10) and perfectly stupefied, and moped (as we say), with them.

(3.) They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an affront and disturbance to their triumphs.

(4.) They shall not have hearts, nor time, nor money, wherewith to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief: “You will be so entirely taken up with solid substantial grief that you will have no room for the shadow of it.”

(5.) Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by *covering their lips*, and laying aside their ornaments, and *going barefoot*; for it is well known that every body is a mourner.

(6.) There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows: “*You shall pine away for your iniquities*, with seared consciences and reprobate minds, and *you shall mourn*, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but *one towards another*,” murmuring, and fretting, and complaining of God, thus making their burden heavier and their wound more grievous, as impatient people do under their afflictions by mingling their own passions with them.

**III.** An appeal to the event, for the confirmation of all this (v. 24): “*When this comes*, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now you cannot believe will ever be, *then you shall know that I am the Lord God*, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign.” Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are preached will be made to remember them when they are executed. Observe,

**1.** The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in (v. 25): *In that day*, that terrible day, when the city shall be broken up, *I will take from them*,

(1.) That which they depended on — *their strength*, their walls, their treasures, their fortifications, their men of war; none shall stand them in stead.

(2.) That which they boasted of — the *joy of their glory*, that which they looked upon as most their glory, and which they most rejoiced in, the temple of their God and the palaces of their princes.

(3.) That which they delighted in, which was the *desire of their eyes*, and on which they *set their minds*. Note, Carnal people set their minds upon that on which they can set their eyes; they look at, and dote upon, *the things that are seen*; and it is their folly to *set their minds* upon that which they have no assurance of and which may be taken from them in a moment, <sup><318></sup>Proverbs 23:5. *Their sons and their daughters* were all this — *their strength, and joy, and glory*; and these shall go into captivity.

2. The notice that should be brought to the prophet, not be revelation, as the notice of the siege was brought to him (v. 2), but in an ordinary way (v. 26): “*He that escapes in that day shall, by a special direction of Providence, come to thee, to bring thee intelligence of it,*” which we find was done, <sup><319></sup>Ezekiel 33:21. The ill-news came slowly, and yet to Ezekiel and his fellow-captives it came too soon.

3. The divine impression which he should be under upon receiving that notice, v. 27. Whereas, from this time to that, Ezekiel was thus far dumb that he prophesied no more against the land of Israel, but against the neighbouring nations, as we shall find in the following chapters, then he shall have orders given him to *speak again to the children of his people* (<sup><320></sup>Ezekiel 33:2, 22); then *his mouth shall be opened*. He was suspended from prophesying against them in the mean time, because, Jerusalem being besieged, his prophecies could not be sent into the city, — because, when God was speaking so loudly by the rod, there was the less need of speaking by the word, — and because then the accomplishment of his prophecies would be the full confirmation of his mission, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that issue, that issue must be waited for. Thus Christ forbade his disciples to preach openly that he was Christ till after his resurrection, because that was to be the full proof of it. “But then *thou shalt speak* with the greater assurance, and the more effectually, either to their conviction or to their confusion.” Note, God's prophets are never silenced but for wise and holy ends. And when God gives them the opening of the mouth again (as he

will in due time, for even the witnesses that are *slain* shall *arise*) it shall appear to have been for his glory that they were for a while silent, that people may the more certainly and fully *know* that *God is the Lord*.