

PROPHETIC ACCUSATIONS

Lesson 2 Ezekiel 4–11

RECAP

Take a moment to share about your experience with last week’s “Spiritual Practice” and “On Mission” sections.

PROPHETIC ACCUSATIONS

God’s people had broken their covenant with Him. Though God continued to warn His people about what would happen if they didn’t repent, they did not listen. **Chapters 4–11** reveal God’s prophetic accusations given to the people through Ezekiel. God was calling out the sin of the people of Israel and declaring that judgment was coming because of their hard, stubborn, and wandering hearts.

READING PLAN

We encourage you to read the entire section of Scripture using the following reading plan.

Day 1: Ezekiel 4–5

Day 2: Ezekiel 6–7

Day 3: Ezekiel 8

Day 4: Ezekiel 9–10

Day 5: Ezekiel 11

OVERVIEW

The questions in this lesson will focus on **Ezekiel 4–5, 8** and **11:14–25**.

Here is a brief summary of the chapters that will not be covered by questions in this lesson:

- **Chapters 6–7** include messages from God that destruction was coming to Israel because of sin. While a handful would be spared, they would be exiled. God continued to give them messages in poetic form. These messages confirmed that no hope remained for the land, that the people were

called to account for their detestable sins, and that God was angry and would not show pity. The people would die for their sins and those who survived would moan with sorrow—their wealth would go to enemies, they would be in chains, and they would have no kings or priests.

- **Chapter 9** continues Ezekiel’s vision with a man wearing linen with a writer’s case who was called by God to go through the city and mark those who wept over their sin. Then six men were called by God to go through the city and kill all who did not have the mark, those who were committing idolatry.¹
- **Chapter 10–11:13** describes the throne, cherubim, and wheels from **chapter 1** again. In the first half of **chapter 11** God gave a message to Ezekiel for the leaders in Israel who were giving the people false security. The message was that God would bring judgment on everyone—no one was safe. While Ezekiel was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah fell dead and Ezekiel asked God, “*O Sovereign LORD, are you going to kill everyone in Israel?*”²

¹ The action of marking is used throughout Scripture. “God told the man with the writer’s case to put a mark on those who were faithful to God. Their faithfulness was determined by their sorrow over their nation’s sin. Those with the mark were spared when the six men began to destroy the wicked people. [Previously,] during the Exodus, the Israelites put a mark of blood on their doorframes to save them from death. In the final days, God will mark the foreheads of those destined for salvation (**Revelation 7:3**), and Satan will mark his followers (**Revelation 13:16–17**), who like him are destined for destruction. When God punishes sin, he won’t forget his promise to preserve his people.” *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 2016. 1319

² **Ezekiel 11:13**

QUESTIONS

Day 1: Ezekiel 4–5

1. What were the four main sign acts³ that God called Ezekiel to act out for the people of Israel? (**Ezekiel 4:1–3, 4–8,**⁴ **9–17; 5:1–4**)
 - a. What did the sign acts represent and what was Ezekiel trying to communicate?⁵ (**Ezekiel 4:3, 4, 13; 5:2–4**)

³ Often, prophets were not only called to speak God's message but also showcase it in some form. Sign acts were used by prophets as object lessons for the people witnessing them.

⁴ “[An] unanswered question is whether Ezekiel actually lay on his side day and night for these two periods of time. Many commentators suggest that he did it only during that part of each day when he would be seen by the public, since it was a visual teaching aid.” This is most likely the case because he is seen fixing meals later in **chapter 4** and in **chapter 8** he was in his house with some leaders when he received the vision of Jerusalem. Macdonald, William. *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson, 2016. Bible Gateway Plus

⁵ By laying bound and on his side, Ezekiel was taking the posture and position of a scapegoat on the day of atonement. However, “Ezekiel didn't ‘bear their sins’ in the sense of atoning for them, for only the Son of God can do that (**1 Peter 1:24**). But ‘bearing the iniquity’ of the nation before God was one of the ministries of the priesthood, and Ezekiel was a priest (**Exodus 28:36–38; Numbers 18:1**). The binding of the prophet and the baring of his arm spoke of the future binding of the prisoners and the baring of God's arm in judgment.” Wiersbe, Warren W., and Ken Baugh. *Be Reverent: Bowing before Our Awesome God: Ezekiel*. David C Cook, 2010. 33-34

b. Why do you think God had Ezekiel act out these prophetic warnings, accusations, and future judgments?⁶

c. We know from the text that the people ultimately did not listen to Ezekiel's warnings (**Ezekiel 3:7**). Their hearts were hard and stubborn. Take a moment to reflect on your own heart. Does it tend to be hard and stubborn? What kind of heart would you like to have?

2. In his accusations, Ezekiel was using language that would have reminded the people of **Leviticus 26**,⁷ where the blessings for obedience to the covenant and the

⁶ "The language of 'visual aid' is altogether too weak. Ezekiel's sign-acts are not diagrams on overhead projectors which helps [us] capture a difficult theological idea. They are 'affective aids,' aimed not at people's eyes but at their hearts and wills, the seat of their 'affections.' They are designed not merely to help people see the truth, but to feel the truth. ... The sign-acts are given not so much to clarify the message of the prophet as to drive it home to the people's hearts." Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel: NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan, 1999. 93

⁷ While the consequences of breaking the covenant were being experienced by the people of Israel, the covenant language was not without hope. "...By pointing his listeners back to **Leviticus 26** and the covenant nature of the forthcoming destruction, [Ezekiel] is already inviting them to consider the grounds of hope implicit within the covenant itself, the faithfulness of the One who established the covenant, God himself. God has purposed in establishing the covenant in the first place to win for himself a people, and he will not allow that purpose to be thwarted, not even by the sins of those whom he has chosen." Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel: NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan, 1999. 104

consequences for disobedience are laid out. The judgment that was coming for Jerusalem and the people of Israel was a direct result of their sin and their disregard for the covenant. It may seem like God was being harsh, yet He was keeping His word.⁸ How does that fact help you understand or interpret the judgment coming directly from God?

- a. While judgment and discipline are different, they can both be consequences of sin—engaging in that which breaks relationship with our Father. **Hebrews 12:5–11** below reminds us that God disciplines His children because He is a good father—it is out of love.

⁵ And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline, and don’t give up when he corrects you. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.” ⁷ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?

⁸ If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his

⁸ “This covenant context is important because it demonstrates that the judgment that will befall Jerusalem is neither arbitrary nor unfair. The judgments coming on that city are not random afflictions thought up on the spur of the moment, as if God has lost his temper; they are the execution of the curses on the covenant breakers. Indeed, Israel has not merely failed to live up to God’s standards; they have not even lived up to the standards of the nations around them.” Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel: NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan, 1999. 100

“As a result, the curses of **Leviticus 26** will be operative in their midst. The Lord’s face will be set against them (**Leviticus 26:17**). The result will be plagues of wild animals (**Leviticus 26:22; Ezekiel 5:17**), the sword and pestilence (**Leviticus 26:25; Ezekiel 5:17**), famine through a cutting off of the food supply (**Leviticus 26:26; Ezekiel 5:16**), eating of one’s own children (**Leviticus 26:29; Ezekiel 5:10**), being scattered among the nations, and being pursued by the sword (**Leviticus 26:33; Ezekiel 5:12**). This threatened exile will be a consequence of the iniquities of that generation and their fathers (**Leviticus 26:39; Ezekiel 4:5**).” Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel: NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan, 1999. 99

Day 3: Ezekiel 8

3. In **Ezekiel 8**, Ezekiel was taken in a vision to the temple in Jerusalem where he saw the people worshipping idols⁹—even people who were supposed to be leading the nation (**8:11**).¹⁰ How do you think Ezekiel felt when he saw what was happening in the temple?

a. How does idolatry make God feel (**Ezekiel 8:5**)? Why do you think it makes Him feel that way?¹¹

⁹ “Some have suggested that this image may have been the one of Asherah set up in the temple by Manasseh (**2 Kings 21:7**; **2 Chronicles 33:7, 15**). This conclusion is not mere speculation but was suggested by the use of the same word (*sēmel*) for Manasseh’s idol in **2 Chronicles 33:7, 15**. These are the only occurrences of the term except in the prohibition against idol worship in **Deuteronomy 4:16–18**. After Manasseh, Josiah had purged Judah and Jerusalem of such things (**2 Chronicles 34**), but his work was reversed after his death (**2 Chronicles 36:5, 9**; **Jeremiah 3:10**). Whatever the details are, the significant fact is that the people had violated God’s prohibition and brought an idol into the temple area dedicated to worship of Yahweh alone (cf. **Exodus 20:4**.” Cooper, Lamar Eugene. *The New American Commentary: Ezekiel*. Vol. 17, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994. 120

¹⁰ “Ezekiel was brought into the north entry gate. There he saw a hole in the wall and was told to dig through the wall, enter, and observe what the elders of Israel were doing secretly in the inner court. These seventy elders were most likely the leaders of the nation who based their traditional position on Moses’ appointment of the seventy elders to assist him in governing God’s people (**Exodus 24:1**; **Numbers 11:16–25**).” Barker, Kenneth L., et al. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Old Testament*. Zondervan, 2004. Bible Gateway Plus

¹¹ “Notice that God is jealous when someone gives to another something that rightly belongs to Him. ... God is speaking of people making idols and bowing down and worshipping those idols instead of giving God the worship that belongs to Him alone. God is possessive of the worship and service that belong to Him. It is a sin to worship or serve anything other than God. It is a sin when we desire, or we are envious, or we are jealous of someone because he has something that we do not have. It is a different use of the word ‘jealous’ when God says He is jealous. What He is jealous of belongs to Him; worship and service belong to Him alone, and are to be given to Him alone.” “Why is God a Jealous God?” *GotQuestions.org*, 13 May 2009, <https://www.gotquestions.org/jealous-God.html>.

b. What can idol worship look like for us today?

c. Take some time to repent of the ways you have replaced God in your heart and life.

4. In **Ezekiel 8:18** God declares that He is going to respond to Israel's sin with fury rather than pity or mercy. God is not being overly harsh, He is holding up His end of the covenant. And He has given them chance after chance to repent. What does it tell you about God that He gave His people so many warnings and chances to repent before He brought destruction?

Day 5: Ezekiel 11

5. In response to Ezekiel's question of God in **11:13**, what did God promise He would do for those in exile in **Ezekiel 11:14–21**?

a. How can God replace our hearts of stone with tender and responsive ones?

b. God extends the promise of renewing hearts to all of His people, then and now. What has that looked like in your life?

c. What does God's promise of future restoration reveal about God?

6. The result of the Israelites disobedience was God's glory leaving the temple in Jerusalem (**Ezekiel 11:22–24**). Where did the glory of God go?

What is significant about the fact that the glory is also "exiled" from the land?¹²

¹² "Israel's idolatry and covenant violations became so blatant and offensive that God decided to leave his own temple. The Israelites have driven their God away, and he gives the city and temple over to destruction, yet God has not abandoned his people. Rather he goes into exile with them. At the end of the vision, God promises that he will return a remnant of Israel back to the land, transforming them by 'removing their heart of stone and giving them a new, soft heart of flesh,' so that they can love and follow their God after all (**Ezekiel 11:19**)." Mackie, Timothy P. *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books*. The Bible Project, 2017. 52

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

While we are no longer under condemnation, we are still living in a sinful world. While we have already been forgiven and made perfect,¹³ God continues to convict us of sin. Sin is anything that breaks relationship with Jesus. By confessing this sin, we live more fully into the truth that we have been made right with God.

Picture yourself in a safe place, surrounded by the love of God. Ask God to help you see yourself as He sees you, fully and completely loved.¹⁴

Listen to His voice and confess the sins that He brings to mind. Ask for forgiveness.

Then pray this prayer:

Lord, You promise in Your Word that I am forgiven. I have named those things that break relationship with You and You have forgiven me for them. Thank You for being the God who paid the price for my sin.

Now take some time to listen as God speaks His love over you and move forward in freedom.

¹³ **Hebrews 10:14**

¹⁴ Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. InterVarsity Press, 2015. 103

ON MISSION

God is a just God and at the end, we all will face judgment. Those who are in Christ need not fear, but those who don't know Christ will face eternal separation from God.¹⁵ However, God longs for all to come to know Him and be with Him forever.

2 Peter 3:9 says, *“The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”*

God longs for people to come to Him and come back to Him.

God has placed each of us exactly where He wants in order to help those around us see God's heart and help them return to Him.

What is God specifically revealing to you about His heart for those around you?

How is He inviting you to join Him in His work?

TAKEAWAY SUMMARY

When you think about prophetic accusations, what is one key takeaway from this lesson?

Write a brief summary of your takeaway on page 106.

¹⁵ **Matthew 25:31–46**

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

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