EZEKIEL 12

Baggage for Exile: No More Delay

> *“For I the LORD will speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it,” declares the Lord GOD.*
> EZEKIEL 12:25

Where Ezekiel has brought us

1. Chapter 12 is undated, but it follows the temple vision of chapters 8–11, about 592 BC.

2. So God goes back to sign-acts, the acted sermons Ezekiel first performed in chapters 4 and 5.



The Sign of the Exile's Baggage

Ezekiel packs a bag by day and digs through his wall at dusk

EZEKIEL 12:2

"Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.

DAVID GUZIK

Block, in Guzik, compares Ezekiel's bag to the sacks shown in Assyrian reliefs, holding only bare necessities. Guzik notes the sign contradicted the prophets who were promising a quick return.

WHAT IT MEANS

The problem in v2 was not lack of information. They had the Law, the prophets and Ezekiel in their midst, yet they "have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear."

Golah (גּוֹלָה)
GOLAH · "EXILE"

Golah means exile, and it can also mean the body of exiles, the community of people carried away. Ezekiel lives among the golah, and God tells him to pack "baggage for exile" and act out going into golah again, in their sight (vv3–4).

The Prince in Jerusalem

God names Zedekiah's flight, capture and blindness years ahead

EZEKIEL 12:9

"Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?'

DAVID GUZIK

Feinberg, in Guzik: 'The subject of the message was King Zedekiah, who was always spoken of by Ezekiel as prince, never king.'

WHAT IT MEANS

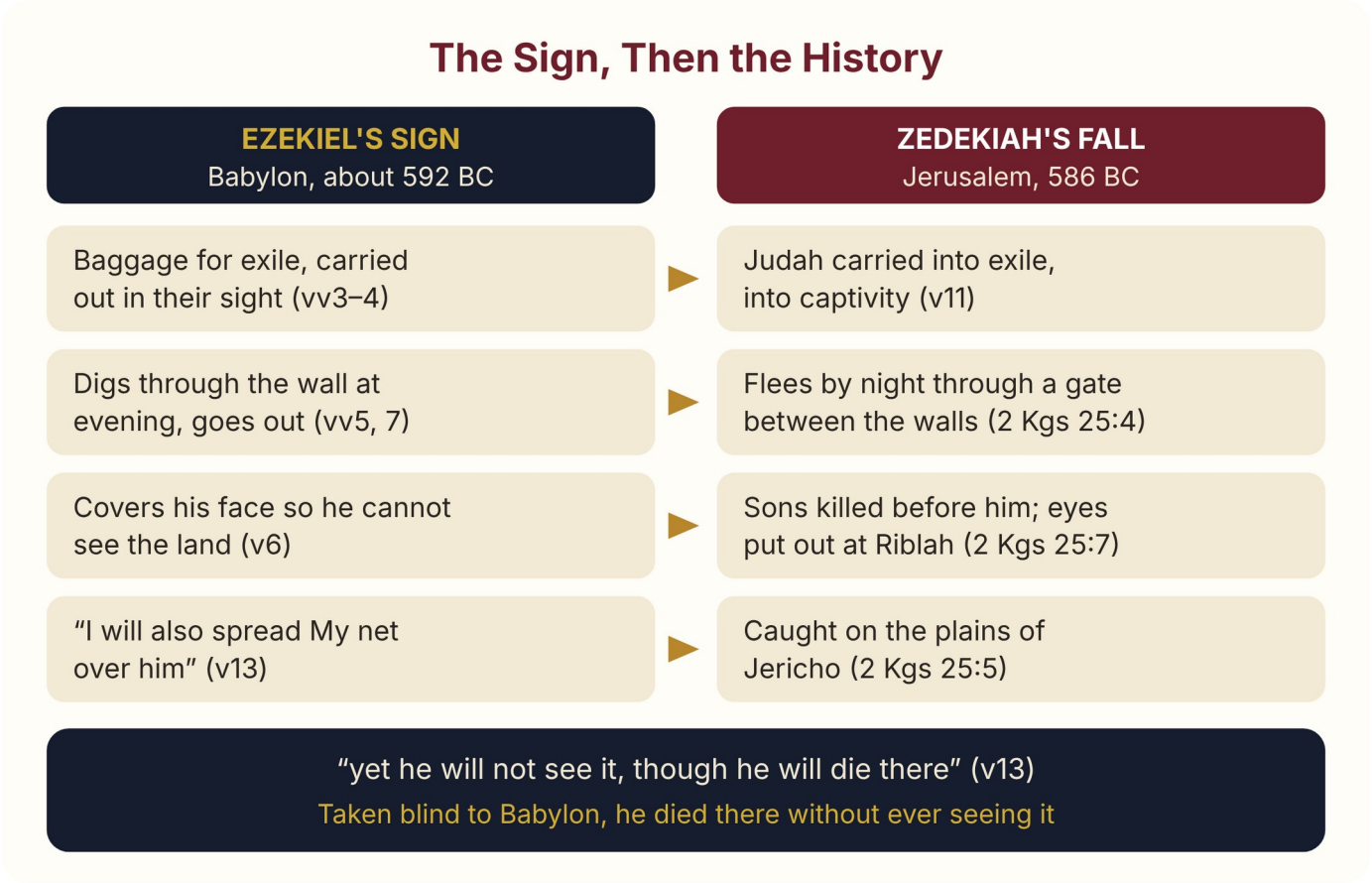
When the exiles ask, "What are you doing?" (v9), God explains: Ezekiel is a sign, and "The prince who is among them will load his baggage on his shoulder in the dark and go out" (v12).

Nasi (נָשִׂיא)

NASI · "PRINCE, LEADER"

Nasi means a leader, chief or prince. Ezekiel uses it for Zedekiah: "This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem" (v10).

The Sign and Its Fulfillment



What Ezekiel acted out in Babylon about 592 BC happened to King Zedekiah in 586 BC, detail for detail.

The Trembling Meal

Bread and water eaten with shaking hands

EZEKIEL 12:18

"Son of man, eat your bread with trembling and drink your water with quivering and anxiety.

DAVID GUZIK

Block, in Guzik, notes that eating and drinking are 'life at its most basic level,' so trembling at the table means nothing is safe anymore.

WHAT IT MEANS

This sign is simple and personal. Ezekiel sits down to ordinary bread and water and eats it shaking (v18).

Ra'ash (רַעַשׁ)

RA'ASH · "QUAKING, TREMBLING"

Ra'ash is quaking or shaking, a body that cannot hold still. Ezekiel is to eat his bread "with trembling" and drink his water "with quivering and anxiety" (v18).

“Every Vision Fails”

God silences the proverb that says nothing ever happens

EZEKIEL 12:22

“Son of man, what is this proverb you people have concerning the land of Israel, saying, ‘The days are long and every vision fails’?

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik writes, ‘The days are prolonged was actually an act of God's mercy.’ Feinberg, in Guzik, adds that God's patience ‘was made an argument against His word.’

WHAT IT MEANS

The first saying is outright doubt: prophets have been warning for years, and nothing has happened. God's answer is to turn the proverb around: “The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision” (v23).

Mashal (מָשָׁל)

MASHAL · “PROVERB, SAYING”

Mashal is a saying, proverb or taunt, a short line that sticks and gets repeated. The one going around Israel was, “The days are long and every vision fails” (v22).

‘It's for Later’

God answers those who push His word into the distant future

EZEKIEL 12:27

“Son of man, behold, the house of Israel is saying, ‘The vision that he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies of times far off.’

DAVID GUZIK

Meyer, in Guzik, describes this second group: ‘They did not deny that he spoke the word of God; but comforted themselves.’

WHAT IT MEANS

The second group is more polite. They do not mock Ezekiel.

Mashak (מָשַׁךְ)

MASHAK · “DRAW OUT, PROLONG”

Mashak means to draw out or prolong, like stretching a cord. In v25 and v28 God says His word will no longer be delayed, will no longer be drawn out.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Blind by choice.

They had “eyes to see but do not see” (v2); Guzik says they could have seen and heard, but they would not.

2

God still hoped.

“Perhaps they will understand” (v3): even a rebellious house got one more vivid warning.

3

Prince, never king.

Feinberg, in Guzik, notes Ezekiel always calls Zedekiah prince, never king.

4

Two prophets, both right.

Jeremiah said Zedekiah would go to Babylon; Ezekiel said he would not see it.

More to carry

5

The net was already spread.

Zedekiah slipped out in the dark, but God said, “I will also spread My net over him” (v13).

6

A burden is a weighty word.

Massa means both a load to carry and a heavy prophetic message (v10).

7

Delay was mercy.

Guzik: the prolonged days were an act of God's mercy, not proof His word had failed.

8

‘Later’ is a lie.

Mashak, to draw out: God says none of His words will be drawn out any longer (v28).

Talk it through

1. What does it look like for a man to have “eyes to see but do not see” about his own life?

2. Ezekiel obeyed in public, even when it looked foolish. Where might God be asking you to live out His truth where others can watch?

3. Zedekiah tried to slip away in the dark. Why do we think we can outrun the consequences of ignoring God?

4. Which excuse do you hear more often, ‘It won't happen’ or ‘Not yet’? Which one do you use?

5. How does knowing that God's warnings came true exactly help you trust His promises?

CLOSING

God packed the warning into a bag, carried it through a hole in the wall, and named a king's escape years before it happened. Every word came true. The same God says His promises in Christ will not be delayed either, so today is the day to turn.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides and reflection journal: see the Ezekiel study page.