

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 140

Ezekiel 24

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Episode Summary

Chapter 24 is a turning book in the book of Ezekiel. After Ezekiel's call (Ch. 1-3), the book has, to this point, been a series of gloom-and-doom pronouncements to the exiled Jews in Babylon subverting their expectations that Jerusalem, the temple, and their friends and loved ones back in Jerusalem were safe from divine judgment. Chapter 24 announces the judgment of the city of Jerusalem and what's left of Israel has begun—Ezekiel is to mark the very day he received the oracles which constitute this chapter.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 140: Ezekiel chapter 24. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! Did you have a good New Year?

MH: Yeah, we did. It was relaxing and uneventful. For me that spells good.

TS: That's good. Welcome to 2017... I am still the champion of Naked Bible, so nothing has changed there. The year is starting off good.

MH: The status of the league is in question. (laughter)

TS: We're on the 24th chapter of Ezekiel. I think this is the halfway mark, isn't it? Aren't there 48?

MH: It is. I've actually been thinking, though, about what I'm going to do with chapters 40-48. I could lump those all together since it's all about the temple, and who wants to go through the "measure this, measure that?" But I don't know. We might actually be over halfway. Who knows? I'll have to put some more thought into it.

TS: At least chapter-wise, that is.

MH: Yeah, chapter-wise.

TS: Book-wise, we're at the halfway point. So that's good. I think we started Ezekiel back in the summer, wasn't it? So this one's going to take us...

MH: After months and months of doomsday messages (laughter), we finally get to chapter 24, which is the siege of Jerusalem. So finally we get to this point where all this stuff Ezekiel has been talking about and saying it's coming, it's finally getting there with this episode.

So let's just jump in. Ezekiel 24 is the turning point chapter, not just because it's about the siege of Jerusalem, but when this happens (and since this happens) his message after this chapter is going to change. It's not going to be doom and gloom against Jerusalem. It's going to be a mix of doom and gloom against the enemy nations (the nations surrounding Israel). So they're going to get their due in a series of oracles, but it's also going to be positive. There's going to be a look forward to the future of Israel and the future of this city, and as Trey just mentioned, with the last eight chapters the future of the temple. What that means and doesn't mean we'll have to wait until we get there. But the message will change after this. This is a hinge point in the whole book. It's been pretty rough going. If you're listening to these messages and if you're an Israelite sitting in Babylon hearing about how bad you are and how bad the people back home are, you know it's true. Even those who don't want to believe it get a demonstration of it. When this chapter takes place, when it comes to fruition. We're going to talk about that in this episode—how to correlate what Ezekiel is saying with the actual historical siege of Jerusalem. When the captives get word of that (and they're going to get word of it while Ezekiel is still there, obviously), it's all going to hit home. But then things are going to shift.

So in this chapter, this is what we're going to be reading about: the siege of Jerusalem. It's going to be communicated *again* by a parable. We've seen parables before. This one's going to be what scholars call "The Parable of the Rusty Cauldron." That's going to occupy about the first half of the chapter, and then we're going to get the episode where Ezekiel's wife dies. God takes her life and he commands Ezekiel to react and respond in a unique way—which, in a nutshell is "don't do any of the traditional mourning stuff." That's going to be used as a sign act and an illustration of how it's going to be once the city collapses—once the city "dies," so to speak. That's going to be a visualization and a message for the captives. That's what they're going to experience. We actually get word at the end of the chapter that this is what's happened. It's still perspective, though, because it's only in chapter 33 when Ezekiel actually gets word from someone who's escaped the city—when Ezekiel and the captives actually hear in real time what happened a considerable amount of time before. But that event is going to be anticipated (the message from that fugitive), that they hear that the city is destroyed. That's going to be mentioned here in this

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chapter. The messaging here, though, literarily (in terms of how the book is arranged) is that it's still a hinge point.

So let's jump into the first verse here. We read:

¹In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.

We get a chronology here, a chronological mark. Scholars have noticed a long, long time that the date itself given in these two verses actually creates internal contradictions on the surface for the way Ezekiel presents the chronology of events elsewhere. To illustrate and sort of get us into what's going on here, I have a selection from Block's commentary, where he notes the problem. I'm bringing this up (even this is sort of mundane material) for a specific reason that I'll camp out on for a minute or two when we're through what Block says here. Block writes:

On first sight this literary unit seems to begin predictably enough with the word-event formula followed by a date notice. But within the context of the book the latter [the date notice] raises several interpretive problems. First, the formulation of the date [MH: the way it's actually written] notice differs from all others in the book. [MH: In other words, the wording here is different than when Ezekiel gives us dates elsewhere. In the Hebrew, it's different.]

Whereas elsewhere such notices usually follow immediately after *wayěhî* [MH: typically “and it came to pass” or some such rendering] and precede statements beginning *hāyâ* [MH: typically “to be”], this one breaks up the word-event formula, appearing before *lē'môr*. [MH: Again, I'm doing this for a reason, so hang with me here.] Furthermore, whereas every other notice that omits the word for month attaches the preposition *bě*, “in,” directly to the ordinal [number]...

But 24:1 doesn't do that. In Hebrew, it says *wayěhî dābār adōnā*. So “and it came to pass, the word of the Lord _____ *ēlhay'* (“to me”). We're going to pick up the verb... You supply some things here. *Wayěhî dābār adōnā ēlhay' bha šanah*. So there's our “in the year.” And then we have *ha tešîit* (“the ninth year”). “The month” is *baḥōdeš*, and “the tenth month” is *hā 'āšîrî*. The “tenth day of the month” is *b ě āšōr ha ḥōdeš lē'môr*.

So we get all the expected things: the year, the month, the day of the month, all that. But what Block is saying is that typically that follows immediately *wayěhî* and it comes before something that... the verb *hāyâ* that appears. That's the way it is in all the other cases of giving a date. So why isn't it here? Why switch up the way you typically announce dates in this chapter? He points that out and says this is the first thing to observe. What's going to happen here is this date is going

to produce internal contradictions. But we notice that the date here in this case is different. So Block's starting to angle for a resolution. The difference in the date formula here is going to be part of the solution.

Second, correlating this date with 33:21–22 creates impossible chronological problems inasmuch as the time span between the commencement of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem and the date Ezekiel receives the report that the city has fallen is five days fewer than three years.

So it's almost three years in between if you go with this date that he gives us here. Block's point is basically that this is unreasonably wrong. Ezekiel 33:21-22 says this. It's later in the book and it's another reference to Jerusalem's fall.

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²¹ In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has been struck down." ²² Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and he had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning, so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.

You have to remember that Ezekiel was not able to talk. This was all the way back at the beginning of the book (we're going to mention this a little bit later), but back in Ezekiel 3 or 4, Ezekiel was struck dumb so that he could only talk when God gave him a message. After the city is destroyed and he gets this report, he says, "I can talk again whenever I want to!" But the thing to notice in these two verse is the date: the twelfth year of our exile—tenth month, fifth day of the month. So Block is saying that if you put these dates together... You take the one here in a 24 and the other in chapter 33, he's like, "That's a three-year interval. It's just too long."

Since the siege is known to have lasted eighteen months (2 K. 25:1–3; Jer. 39:1–2), it would have taken the survivor almost one and one-half years to reach the exiles in Babylon, which by any calculation is far too long. [MH: It's just not that long of a trip.]

Third, the formulation of the date notice is virtually identical to the notice in 2 K. 25:1 (= Jer. 52:4).

So he says we have three things to observe here. The date that we're given creates internal problems, but if we look at how the date is given, we've got to deal with three things here. So a little later in his commentary, he writes this:

Based on these observations [these three issues], one may assume that in this instance the editor of Ezekiel's oracles...

I'll just stop right there. Remember way back when we started the book of Ezekiel, I said there are going to be periodic times where we have to talk about how the book was put together. This is, again, why I bring it up. Many Christians have an unworkable picture of inspiration—that the content of the Bible just sort of dropped from heaven or was downloaded into a writer's brain. When you get into stuff like this, that view just does not work. Block's going to explain why we have to think about when the book was edited: how it was put together and why. This is not a magical download into somebody's head. There's actually thinking going on. There's something intentional going on. Writers and editors... So Ezekiel himself as he's preaching this stuff, somebody is writing it down. Maybe it's him, maybe it's somebody else. But then after he's dead, it has to get put together in the form of a book. When we talked about this at the very beginning of this study, I used Ezekiel 1:1-3 as an example of an editorial hand (how the person and number switches). You may or may not remember that, but here we go again. The person or persons putting the book together is/are making decisions. They're doing things intentionally. They're not going into trances and having the words of the text downloaded into their skulls. That's just not the way this works. So back to Block:

Based on these observations, one may assume that in this instance the editor of Ezekiel's oracles diverged from the prophet's otherwise consistent practice of dating oracles on the basis of the exile, [MH: In other words, Ezekiel typically dates things by the time they went into exile.] and followed the official Jewish system of reckoning based on the king's regnal year.

So Block is theorizing here that in this instance, this date that we have that's different than all the other ones was put here by an editor, and the editor uses a different formula—dating something by the king's regnal year instead of how Ezekiel typically does it.

The former would have the [earliest possible date] as Nisan, 597 B.C., but since the accession year did not enter the calculations in the latter system the [earliest possible date] would have been one year later, viz., 596. According to the latter system, 10 Tebet of Zedekiah's ninth year, the day the siege began, computes to January 5, 587 (= day siege begins; timing of the DOL).

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And Block is going to argue that this is the day the siege begins—January 5, 587. That's the timing in the Israelite mind of the beginning of the Day of the Lord, when all this bad stuff is actually going to happen that Ezekiel's been telling us about.

However, this conclusion raises the question why the system used to date the present oracle should have diverged from the standard pattern in the book. The answer is surely to be found in the precision expressed in Yahweh's command to Ezekiel in the following verse: he is to write down the name of this day (*šēm hayyôm*), presumably reflecting the

official system of dating, not Ezekiel's idiosyncratic method based on Jehoiachin's and his own exile.

So it's based on sort of the real-time regnal year of the person reigning back then, whereas Ezekiel typically based dates on the date of his own exile. So if you do that, if you make that adjustment (you assume that an editor put this date in and the editor was using the regnal year—connecting the date with the reign of the person in charge back there—instead of the way that all the other dates are formed), then you don't have a chronological problem. Then the problem of Ezekiel 33:21-22 (this unreasonably long distance between the siege and the fugitive coming to them) is taken care of.

I want to just throw that out, like I said a few moments ago, because you have to factor this kind of thing in to your view of inspiration. *Writers make decisions.* They do things intentionally. There are reasons why this or that writer or this or that editor does something. It may conflict with something else in the book. So critics come along and say, "Look at this chronological problem—the Bible is full of errors!" No, it's time to get a clue, dude. What happens here is biblical books had more than one hand touching them. That was the process. One editor apparently wanted to date something very specifically in a different way, and that's why we have this and the Hebrew itself is different than all of the other date formulas. That should tell you something. That should give you a clue that something else is going on here.

Again, Block in his commentary discusses how to look at this and resolve it. I mention it here, not so that we all get into biblical chronology. Trust me—I've been there, done that, and it's kind of a quagmire. But it has value for illustrating a point. I can say this on a podcast, I could go to a church or whatever and say, "Hey, we need to think differently about inspiration, but here's an actual concrete example where if you thinking that all this is just downloaded into somebody's head and that no other hands touched it... In other words, if you're thinking the biblical books didn't get made like normal books did, then you're going to have problems."

Again, we need to let the actual (I'll do my scholar-speak here now) *realia* of the text (the phenomena of the text)—what's actually in the text itself... That needs to steer our theology about the text. We don't invent our theology and then ignore the text, although that's kind of what happens a lot when people do systematic theology or they talk in theory about inspiration. No, no, if we're going to say this thing is inspired, we have to look at what is actually in the thing and then formulate our doctrine on that basis.

End of little theological diatribe here.

So let's go back to chapter 24. After he is given the date, God gives Ezekiel a command. It starts in verse 3, so I'm going to read verses 3 through 14. He's going to command Ezekiel something specific. He says:

³ And utter a parable to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord God:

**“Set on the pot, set it on;
pour in water also;
⁴ put in it the pieces of meat,
all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder;
fill it with choice bones.
⁵ Take the choicest one of the flock;
pile the logs under it;
boil it well;
seethe also its bones in it.**

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⁶ “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose corrosion is in it, and whose corrosion has not gone out of it! Take out of it piece after piece, without making any choice. ⁷ For the blood she has shed is in her midst; she put it on the bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground to cover it with dust. ⁸ To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have set on the bare rock the blood she has shed, that it may not be covered. ⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God: Woe to the bloody city! I also will make the pile great. ¹⁰ Heap on the logs, kindle the fire, boil the meat well, mix in the spices, and let the bones be burned up. ¹¹ Then set it empty upon the coals, that it may become hot, and its copper may burn, that its uncleanness may be melted in it, its corrosion consumed. ¹² She has wearied herself with toil; its abundant corrosion does not go out of it. Into the fire with its corrosion! ¹³ On account of your unclean lewdness, because I would have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you. ¹⁴ I am the LORD. I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it. I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord God.”

So we get this parable and there are parts of it that are going to be clearer than others. If you went through the Leviticus series, there's this part about how you didn't cover the blood with dirt and all that stuff. (That might bring your memory back to something in Leviticus that we did.)

Just generally, we have an allegory here. The odds are that Ezekiel actually does this. He takes a pot, he builds a fire under it, he throws the meat... This may also be a sign act. He may also be acting out the parable as he's giving it, and then as he's giving its implications. So the pot is Jerusalem. We learn that from verse 6:

⁶“Therefore thus says the Lord God: Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose corrosion is in it...

So there's some kind of corrosion or corruption about it. Or is it the corruption of the contents? (We'll get to that in a moment.) But the pot is Jerusalem. Now you would think that if the pot is Jerusalem, then what's inside the pot is the thing that is corrosive or corrupt. But a lot of commentators go the other direction. So does the meat in the pot symbolize the corruption, or is it the pot itself? There's a question there for interpreters.

The reason why there's a difference of opinion (and you'll actually get this difference kind of illustrated in translations)... For instance, the Septuagint translator takes the Hebrew here (the word that's translated "corrosion" in the ESV is the Hebrew term *ḥel'â*) as meaning "rust." So if you have a translator and they're working on a particular English translation and he gets influenced by the way the Septuagint handles this, then it's going to work out in the English translation that you're going to read what the translator produces and think there's something wrong with the pot—it's rusty, or something like that. And some English translations have that. The problem, though, is that verse 11 tells us the pot was made of copper and copper does not rust. So we have kind of a real-world problem with that particular angle/translation.

That raises the question, "If it doesn't make a whole lot of sense that the *ḥel'â* ("corrosion, rust, corruption" or something like that) is about the pot, then you would think that it has to refer to what's *in* the pot. Then the question comes up, "Why in verses 4 and 5, then, does God say to put in the good pieces of meat, the choice bone?" It sounds like there's nothing wrong with what's put in.

I think you can already tell that I don't follow the Septuagint here. I don't think it makes sense to have the pot be the problem with corrosion because it is copper. It doesn't make any sense. I think it is the contents that are corrupt, and that matches much better the analogy of the allegory. You can say "Yes, Jerusalem is corrupt." I get that. But it's the people inside that are the problem. They're the ones that are morally accountable. Jerusalem's corruption is an abstract. There's nothing wrong with the buildings or the streets or whatever. It's the people that have created the problem, that have created the circumstance of the exile and God's judgment. So to me, saying the contents are corrupt makes a lot more sense in the analogy.

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The reason why they'd be called "the choicest" and "the good pieces" is because they're God's people. He had chosen them from among all the nations and they started out well. That would be the point. You had all these advantages. You were chosen by God. God led you into the land, and you had David and Solomon and the temple, and everything was going okay. Under Solomon's reign it starts to go a little bit sour, and then after he dies... boy, we just know what happens. The whole system just collapses.

So I think that would be the point of the positive language about what's going into the pot and having the contents of the pot still be corrupted. To me, that just makes a lot better sense. Block has a comment here. If you go with the idea that it's the contents:

The statement then represents a direct challenge to the people's mistaken perception of their status. Far from being Yahweh's choice cuts, the residents of Jerusalem are nothing more than putrid flesh, fit only to be discarded as refuse.

We've seen this kind of messaging in Ezekiel prior to this point, where the people think a certain way about themselves. "We're left here. God's favor is upon us! We're the good guys." And Ezekiel has had to say, "No, no, no, no, no... that would be a mistaken conclusion to draw. And the magnitude of the mistaken conclusion is going to be illustrated for you because the people who *are* left back in Jerusalem that are saying this about themselves... Or that you're presuming: "We're sitting here in Babylon, but the ones that God left and didn't take into exile must be okay. The city must be doing fine and be fine." Ezekiel is saying the misguided nature of that is going to be shown to you pretty radically when the city is destroyed.

So what Block says here and my own trajectory here of not following the Septuagint... Obviously this isn't unique with me, but I think internally it just makes better sense to see the contexts of the pot as corrupt because it just fits the analogy better. The people inside are the ones that are going to be judged. It's something Ezekiel has hit on many, many times.

Before I go to verse 15, let me make a comment about this section:

⁷ For the blood she has shed is in her midst; she put it on the bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground to cover it with dust.

I made this comment about Leviticus. If you remember back in Leviticus, you remember some of the regulations. It's kind of natural for Ezekiel to take either the illegitimate bloodshed that resulted from the corruption of the people inside the city... He's talked about that elsewhere, and we've covered that ground in recent episodes. It might be a reference, too, to illegitimate sacrifice—whether it's child sacrifice or some other sacrifice. But if you remember, Leviticus has some

rules about not consuming blood and about disposing of blood in certain ways, and there was this notion that you wanted to cover the blood with dirt or dispose of it in a certain way so that it couldn't be reused in a ritual sense in a wrong way, like by someone who wanted to reuse the blood to perhaps worship a different deity or to do something magical with it. Again, if you listened to the series on Leviticus, that probably rings a bell. But since Ezekiel is a priest, he's drawing on that idea here. It points to illegitimate worship again. It's not just random violence, even though as we've tracked through the last few chapters of Ezekiel, we've seen that there's certainly plenty of that going on in this city—plenty of that kind of human-to-human corruption and injustice. But here we have another reference to the illegitimate worship that's going on there, too.

But let's go to verses 15 through 27, which is really the end of the chapter. Let's just read the rest of the chapter and then comment on a few things.

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¹⁵The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶“Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke [MH: very suddenly]; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead [MH: keep it to yourself]. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.” ¹⁸So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.

¹⁹And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?” [MH: Obviously, they would have known that his wife had died.] ²⁰Then I said to them, “The word of the LORD came to me: ²¹‘Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul, and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. ²²And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. ²³Your turbans shall be on your heads and your shoes on your feet; you shall not mourn or weep, but you shall rot away in your iniquities and groan to one another. ²⁴Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign; according to all that he has done you shall do. When this comes, then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.’

²⁵“As for you, son of man, surely on the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their soul's desire, and also their sons and daughters, ²⁶on that day a fugitive will come to you to report to you the news. ²⁷On that day your mouth will be opened to the

fugitive, and you shall speak and be no longer mute. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD."

That's the end of chapter 24. Again, the gist of this is that Ezekiel is told by God, "I'm going to take your wife and you're not to visibly or audibly mourn in the customary manner." As far as the mourning customs, Taylor has a nice summary here. I'll just read this little section to you:

The mourning customs reflected in these verses are interesting. Five aspects may be observed, (a) *Sigh, but not aloud* (17, rsv): the word 'sigh' is normally used of the noisy groaning of wounded men and is a reminder of the ritual lamentations that were regularly laid on for funeral occasions (cf. Mark 5:38). (b) *Bind on your turban* (rsv): in mourning the turban, the normal headdress of the priest (cf. Exod. 39:28; Ezek. 44:18), though it was also the festal headgear for a layman (Isa. 61:3, 10), would be removed and the head covered in dust and ashes (cf. Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; Job 2:12).

The point is that when God says "keep the turban on your head," he's saying, "Don't do the expected mourning things, taking it off and covering your head with dust and ashes." That's a public gesture of mourning. God says to Ezekiel, "Don't do that."

(c) *Put your shoes on your feet*: the sandals were taken off in time of distress, as in 2 Samuel 15:30 (cf. also Isa. 20:2).

Again, don't do that. Someone might associate that with public mourning. God's whole point is that, "I want you to act in ways that are noticeably contrary to anything associated with public mourning. So don't take the sandals/shoes off your feet."

(d) Covering the *lips* was compulsory for the leper (Lev. 13:45), and was a sign of disgrace (Mic. 3:7). It involved veiling the lower part of the face from the nose downwards: the word *lips* (*šāpām*) really means 'moustache', which it regularly represents in modern Hebrew.

This was for the man. Normally, your face isn't veiled. But when you're mourning, this is something you do. But God's instructions were not to do that.

(e) *Eat not the bread of men* (rv):

... The phrase 'of men' means 'ordinary', 'common' (according to its use in Deut. 3:11; Isa. 8:1), so the command here is not to eat ordinary food, i.e. the mourners' funeral meal. Cf. Jeremiah 16:7. Indeed it is useful to compare these words with the whole section in Jeremiah 16:5–13, where Jeremiah was

forbidden by God to enter the house of mourning and was called upon to give his reasons when he was challenged by the people.

So you get a similar section in Jeremiah. So when he says, "don't eat the food of men," he's saying not to eat what's typically eaten as part of a funeral meal, as part of mourning. Don't do anything that could be construed as the normal process of mourning in the wake of a death. So that's what Ezekiel is commanded. Now, why? The captives in Babylon who are hearing this from Ezekiel ask why in verse 19:

¹⁹And the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?"

And Ezekiel gives his response:

²¹'Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul, and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword.'

To condense it, "And when that happens, you're going to do just what Ezekiel's been doing. That's what I want you to do. I want you to behave in your loss the way he's behaving in his loss because I told him so. That's going to be a sign to you that this is my loss, too, but I want it to be the aberration that it is. This should have never happened." Taylor writes here:

Just as Ezekiel's dearest one had been taken away from him by a single stroke, so the nation was to lose its dearest object, its proud boast (*the pride of your power*, RSV), the desire of its soul (*that which your soul pitieth*, AV meaning 'object of your soul's compassion'). The people of Jerusalem would lose their children by enemy action as well.

The people of Jerusalem will lose Jerusalem, they'll lose the temple, and they'll lose their loved ones that are back there. Just like Ezekiel loses his loved one (the thing that's dearest to him), God says, "I'm going to profane my own sanctuary because this is the thing that I gave you that was obviously at one point dearest to me. It was dearest to *you* because the sanctuary indicates my presence"... the presence of the true God on earth among people—his people, the people he had chosen. That's all going away.

We've seen this kind of language from God before, where God essentially says, "You know what? I'm doing this and I'm good with it. It needs to be done. I'm not going to be upset, and as a sign to you that I'm not going to be upset, I'm telling

Ezekiel when his wife dies to not mourn publicly. That's how I want *you* to respond. That's how you *should* respond to illustrate both to yourselves and to the rest of the people around you (the whole group there) that this is going to be a sign for how I look at things. If you agree with me on the necessity of all this—on the *rightness* of it, the fact that you deserve it—it should be the way you act, too." God knows, obviously how they look at Jerusalem and the temple and what-not, which is why he uses this language.

The chapter ends with his comment about Ezekiel, where he says:

²⁶on that day a fugitive will come to you to report to you the news. ²⁷On that day your mouth will be opened to the fugitive, and you shall speak and be no longer mute.

This is the real place where you see most clearly the transition. Back in Ezekiel 3:25 or 26 or so, Ezekiel had been struck dumb. He could only speak when God gave him a message; he couldn't function normally otherwise. But when that was done to him so that the people would know that when Ezekiel *does* speak, they need to pay attention because the only way he *can* speak is when God is giving him a message. So when Ezekiel's mouth (his tongue) is loosed, the people who know the circumstance should have their ears perked up because this is a message from God. If it wasn't from God, Ezekiel wouldn't be talking because he *can't* talk unless God is the one speaking through him. So that was done to get them to pay attention and to discern the seriousness through the reality of what's going to happen.

40:00

And then, finally (here we are in chapter 24) when it does happen, then the fact that Ezekiel is no longer under this burden or restriction is a sign that it's done now. It's happened now. It forms this transition. So from chapter 25 onward, the subject matter of the book is going to change and what Ezekiel says is going to change. There's no need for more prophecies of doom against the city because the city is destroyed and the last wave of captivity is going to be occurring. It's over. It's done. Ezekiel's role is going to become more pastoral. He's a prophet, but it's sort of less of a prophet (the doom and gloomer) and he's going to be more pastoral. He'll be referred to with terms like "shepherd" and "watchman" for his people. He'll start talking about the judgment of Jerusalem's enemies (not Jerusalem but her enemies, who are God's enemies). He'll start talking about the positive future for Israel—that it's not completely dead (going back to this remnant thinking). That God had to wipe the slate clean, but that doesn't mean he's abandoning the plan. Again, you'll start hearing about Israel's future even though we've had all of this disaster. So the transition to a positive message for Israel only happens when the judgment actually occurs in real time and when the captives (Ezekiel himself among them) actually hear historical confirmation from this fugitive.

That's why, in the next several episodes (and if you remember when we overviewed the book way back at the beginning), there's a section from chapter 25 to 32 or 33 that is called "the oracles against the nations." So God turns his focus away from Jerusalem. "We're done with that now; we'll come back to them and they will have a future. But I'll tell you who's *not* going to have a future, and that's my enemies! We've judged my people Israel, but now we're going to start talking about the enemies. Their judgment is going to have a finality to it that the other doesn't because we're going to take care of them and then we're going to start talking about the future." And the future is not going to include them in the sense that they're going to be important empires and important cities. Whenever they're going to be mentioned, it's with this talk that they're going to be "turned to Yahweh." Not so much in Ezekiel's book, but in other prophets you get the same kind of thing. In Jeremiah you have oracles against the nations and then you have talk about how they're going to bow the knee (the whole "every knee shall bow" kind of thing going on). When God's enemies are spoken of in futuristic terms, you really get two things: "When I judge them that will really be it for them, and that *was* it for them and they're done with that, and they're not ever going to return to be the entities that they were" OR "There's going to come out of them those who will bow the knee to the God of Israel and who will assimilated into the family of God—into the believing community—because their hearts will be changed" (this whole conversion talk that we get). We're going to get some of that in Ezekiel. You get it in other prophets, but here's the transition point. So in the next few episodes we're going to get the oracles against the nations, so you know what the context is and why the transition is here—why the whole tone (at least the object of what Ezekiel's after) is going to change. That's a little bit of a preview for where we're going to be in the next few episodes.

TS: All right, Mike. Well, I'm looking forward to that. Real quickly, I just want to remind everybody that we're still having a contest going on until January 31. Please post anything you want to, encouraging people to listen to this podcast in social media. So wherever you roam, if you want to write a blog post or tweet about it on Twitter or do a post on Facebook, it doesn't matter. I will find you and pick the three winners for Mike's new upcoming book.

MH: (laughing) "I'll find you..."

45:00

TS: I will find you. We've gotten several funny posts and good posts. We certainly appreciate everybody that's done that so far. And also, we've gotten a good response on our Christmas episode, so that's pretty cool. It's a new year, so I just want to briefly mention if our listeners out there, if you're listening to this podcast right now, if *everybody* would give at least three dollars a month, we would completely meet our goal of a full-time ministry. So if every human being listening to this show right now just gave three dollars a month, we would be able to do this ministry full-time. That's our goal. Hopefully going here into 2017, we'll inch closer to that goal. Thank you to everybody thus far. We've got the translations... We couldn't do what we're doing now without the current support.

MH: Now that you mention it, Trey... I'm not going to mention anything here, because if you want specific updates on some of the projects that we're doing (translations of *Supernatural* is the big one in 2017), I do have a pretty significant update, but I'm only going to put that in the newsletter. Please go to drmsb.com and subscribe to the newsletter and you'll get some specific updates on that.

TS: Let's continue to push and encourage the people around us, whether it be at church or friends or family, expose them to this content and the show and Mike's books and see if we can't change minds, hearts, and thoughts out there. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this particular episode?

MH: I don't think so. The goal here is pretty simple. We just want you to learn something every episode. We're trying to be a source of content, but we do need to do a lot more of it. Like Trey said, we just need the support.

TS: Thank you for everybody who has left a review or rated us or has left a review for Mike's books on Amazon or wherever. I also created a Naked Bible Podcast Facebook page, so if you want to do a Facebook search for that page, I'm contemplating what we're going to do with that. But I've created it, so if you want a safer place to go and discuss episodes amongst yourselves you can certainly do that. I think it's [thenbpodcast](https://www.facebook.com/thenbpodcast)... I think that's the handle I had to create for Facebook because Facebook wouldn't let me use the word "naked" in there. It's a banned word, Mike, it's bad! (laughter)

MH: And you want to put it on T-shirts... never mind.

TS: Eventually. Hopefully we're going to get some swag going this year. That's one of my goals. We're certainly going to do that.

All right, Mike... we appreciate it. We appreciate everybody else out there, and hopefully we'll have a good 2017. I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.