Ezekiel 12

The Exile's Baggage: No Word Delayed

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

People can stare at the truth and still not see it. God acted out the fall of Jerusalem in front of the exiles, named the king's escape and capture years ahead, and then dismantled the two excuses that keep people from repenting: "It'll never happen" and "It won't happen to me, not yet." God's patience is not a broken promise. When He speaks, it will be done.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 12 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | Amber Time / place / contrast

1 The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, ⚠ which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

3 Therefore, thou son of man, Green prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: ▲ it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

5 Green Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

6 In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: ▲ for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.

7 And Green I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight.

8 And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, Amber What doest thou?

10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Amber This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them.

11 Say, Amber I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity.

12 And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: ⚠ he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes.

13 ▲ My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; ⚠ yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

15 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

16 But ★ I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

17 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

18 Son of man, Green eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;

19 And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, ⚠ because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

21 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

22 Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, ⚠ The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?

23 Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, ▲ The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

24 For there shall be ⚠ no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

25 For I am the LORD: I will speak, and ▲ the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

26 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

27 Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and ⚠ he prophesieth of the times that are far off.

28 Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; ▲ There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

Marked in the text

- **v2** ⇄ a rebellious house *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** ⚠ which have eyes to see, and see not
- **v3** ▮▮ prepare thee stuff for removing
- **v3** ⇄ in their sight *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** ▲ it may be they will consider
- **v5** ▮▮ Dig thou through the wall
- **v6** ▲ for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel
- **v7** ▮▮ I did so as I was commanded
- **v9** ◷ What doest thou?
- **v10** ◷ This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem
- **v11** ◷ I am your sign
- **v12** ⚠ he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes
- **v13** ▲ My net also will I spread upon him
- **v13** ⚠ yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there
- **v15** ⇄ they shall know that I am the LORD *(every occurrence)*
- **v16** ★ I will leave a few men of them
- **v18** ▮▮ eat thy bread with quaking
- **v19** ⚠ because of the violence of all them that dwell therein
- **v22** ⚠ The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth
- **v23** ▲ The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision
- **v24** ⚠ no more any vain vision nor flattering divination
- **v25** ▲ the word that I shall speak shall come to pass
- **v27** ⚠ he prophesieth of the times that are far off
- **v28** ▲ There shall none of my words be prolonged any more

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 12:3 (KJV)

3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

Setting

The chapter is undated, but it follows the temple vision of chapters 8–11 (about 592 BC). Ezekiel is in Babylon among the exiles deported with Jehoiachin in 597 BC. Back home, Zedekiah reigns as Babylon's vassal and is already leaning toward rebellion. False prophets in both places promise that the exile will be short and Jerusalem will stand. Ezekiel has just told the exiles everything he saw (11:25). Now God gives two acted-out signs and answers two popular sayings that let the people shrug off His word.

Structure

- vv1–2 — **a rebellious house:** "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" (v2).
- vv3–7 — **the sign of the exile's baggage:** "prepare for yourself baggage for exile" and move by day in their sight; "Perhaps they will understand though they are a rebellious house" (v3). In the evening, "Dig a hole through the wall in their sight and go out through it" (v5). "cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have set you as a sign to the house of Israel" (v6). "I did so, as I had been commanded" (v7).
- vv8–16 — **the meaning:** the exiles ask, "What are you doing?" (v9). "This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem" (v10). "I am a sign to you … they will go into exile, into captivity" (v11). "The prince who is among them will load his baggage on his shoulder in the dark and go out" (v12). "I will also spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare," and he will be brought to Babylon, "yet he will not see it, though he will die there" (v13). "I will draw out a sword after them" (v14). "So they will know that I am the LORD when I scatter them among the nations" (v15). "But I will spare a few of them from the sword, the famine and the pestilence" so they can confess their abominations among the nations (v16).
- vv17–20 — **the sign of the trembling meal:** "eat your bread with trembling and drink your water with quivering and anxiety" (v18). So the people of Jerusalem will eat and drink, because their land will be stripped "on account of the violence of all who live in it" (v19). The cities will be laid waste (v20).
- vv21–25 — **the first proverb — "every vision fails":** the saying in Israel: "The days are long and every vision fails" (v22). God replaces it: "The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision" (v23). "For there will no longer be any false vision or flattering divination" (v24). "For I the LORD will speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed" (v25).

- vv26–28 — **the second saying — "it's for later":** "The vision that he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies of times far off" (v27). God: "None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed" (v28).

Repeated words

rebellious house (vv2, 3, 9, 25); in their sight (vv3, 4, 5, 6, 7); baggage (vv3, 4, 6, 7, 12); exile (vv3, 4, 7, 11); sign (vv6, 11); wall (vv5, 7, 12); prince (vv10, 12); "the word of the LORD came to me" (vv1, 8, 17, 21, 26); "know that I am the LORD" (vv15, 16, 20); vision (vv22, 23, 24, 27); delayed (vv25, 28).

Contrasts

eyes to see ⟷ do not see (v2). Ezekiel covering his face (v6) ⟷ the prince who "will not see" Babylon though he dies there (v13). A prince slipping out in the dark (v12) ⟷ God's net already spread (v13). "Every vision fails" (v22) ⟷ "the fulfillment of every vision" (v23). "Times far off" (v27) ⟷ "in your days" (v25). Flattering divination (v24) ⟷ "whatever word I speak will be performed" (v25).

Chapter theme (my words)

People can stare at the truth and still not see it. God acted out the fall of Jerusalem in front of the exiles, named the king's escape and capture years ahead, and then dismantled the two excuses that keep people from repenting: "It'll never happen" and "It won't happen to me, not yet." God's patience is not a broken promise. When He speaks, it will be done.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 12:13 (KJV)

13 ▲ My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; ⚠ yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

A rebellious house (vv1–2)

The problem was not lack of information. They had the Law, the prophets, the temple's history, and now Ezekiel in their midst. Guzik: they "could have seen and heard – but they would not." Jesus used the same words for the crowds of His day (Mark 8:18; compare Isa 6:9–10). Spiritual blindness is willful before it becomes judicial.

The baggage and the hole in the wall (vv3–7)

Ezekiel packs the small bag of a deportee — Block, in Guzik, compares it to the sacks shown in Assyrian reliefs, holding only bare necessities. He sets it out by day, then at dusk digs through the wall of his house and slips out with his face covered. Guzik notes this contradicted the prophets promising a quick return. Feinberg, in Guzik: the digging "pictured the desperation with which they would seek

to escape." McGee, in Guzik, suggests Ezekiel "might have been somewhat of a ham actor." The point is that God made His warning impossible to miss. "Perhaps they will understand" (v3) — God still hoped.

The prince in Jerusalem (vv8–14)

The prince is Zedekiah. Feinberg, in Guzik: "The subject of the message was King Zedekiah, who was always spoken of by Ezekiel as prince, never king." Every detail came true in 586 BC. When the Babylonians broke through, Zedekiah fled by night through a gate between the walls (2 Kgs 25:4; Jer 39:4; Wright, in Guzik, points to this). The covered face pictures defeat and furtive flight; Vawter and Hoppe, in Guzik, speak of "the instinctive furtiveness with which the defeated flee." He was caught on the plains of Jericho — God's net — and brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. There his sons were slaughtered before his eyes, his eyes were put out, and he was taken in bronze chains to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:5–7; Jer 39:5–7; 52:8–11). So he went to Babylon and died there, but never saw it (v13). Guzik observes that "the last sight King Zedekiah saw was the murder of his own sons." Clarke, in Guzik: "How accurate the prediction! and how exactly fulfilled!" The Jewish historian Josephus later wrote that Zedekiah refused to believe either Jeremiah or Ezekiel because their prophecies seemed to contradict each other — Jeremiah said he would be taken to Babylon (Jer 32:4–5), Ezekiel said he would not see it. Both were exactly right.

A few spared to testify (vv15–16)

God scatters the nation so that they will know He is the LORD. Guzik: "In the end, it was to reveal Himself to them, even if it were in His judgments." Even the survivors have a purpose — to confess among the nations that their own abominations brought this on them.

The trembling meal (vv17–20)

Ezekiel eats his ordinary bread and water while shaking. Block, in Guzik, notes that eating and drinking are "life at its most basic level"; trembling at the table means nothing is safe anymore. Wiersbe, in Guzik, notes the food would be scarce and possibly the last meal. The cause is named plainly: "the violence of all who live in it" (v19). Sin always costs more than it promises.

"Every vision fails" (vv21–25)

The proverb said: prophets have been warning for years and nothing has happened. Guzik: "The days are prolonged was actually an act of God's mercy." Feinberg adds that God's patience "was made an argument against His word." Block, in Guzik, observes that Ezekiel "skillfully" recasts their proverb: the days are not long — they are near. God also promises to silence the false prophets and their flattering divination (v24). Peter answers the same mockery in the last days: the Lord is not slow, He is patient, wanting all to come to repentance (2 Pet 3:3–9).

"It's for later" (vv26–28)

The second group doesn't deny Ezekiel speaks for God; they just push it into the distant future. Meyer, in Guzik: "They did not deny that he spoke the word of God; but comforted themselves." Morgan, in Guzik, sees both errors: "Either it mocks at the prophetic word, or says that fulfillment is postponed." Guzik, drawing on Spurgeon, warns that this delay excuse keeps many people, especially the young, from trusting God now. The answer for both groups is the same: "Whatever word I speak will be performed" (v28). Within six years Jerusalem fell.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **rebellious — *meri* (H4805):** rebellion, bitter defiance.
- **baggage — *keli* (H3627):** a vessel, article, gear.
- **exile — *golah* (H1473):** exile, the body of exiles.
- **dig — *chathar* (H2864):** to dig through, break in.
- **wall — *qir* (H7023):** a wall, the side of a house.
- **sign — *mopheth* (H4159):** a wonder, a sign or portent.
- **burden — *massa* (H4853):** a load; an oracle, a weighty prophetic message.
- **prince — *nasi* (H5387):** a leader, chief, prince.
- **net — *resheth* (H7568):** a net for catching game.
- **snare — *matsodah* (H4686):** a net, snare, stronghold.
- **trembling — *raash* (H7494):** quaking, shaking.
- **anxiety — *deagah* (H1674):** worry, care, fear.
- **proverb — *mashal* (H4912):** a saying, proverb, taunt.
- **vision — *chazon* (H2377):** a vision, revelation.
- **flattering — *chalaq* (H2509):** smooth, slippery, flattering.
- **delayed — *mashak* (H4900):** to draw out, prolong.

Cross-references

Deut 29:4; 2 Kgs 25:1–7; Isa 6:9–10; Jer 5:21; Jer 32:4–5; Jer 34:3; Jer 39:4–7; Jer 52:7–11; Ezek 4:16–17; Ezek 17:16–20; Hab 2:3; Matt 13:13–15; Mark 8:18; Luke 21:33; 2 Cor 6:2; Heb 3:13–15; 2 Pet 3:3–10.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 12:5 (KJV)

5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

Command to obey — do it in their sight

"I did so, as I had been commanded" (v7). Ezekiel looked foolish digging through his own wall with his face covered, but he obeyed exactly and publicly. Sometimes God calls me to live out His truth where people can watch and wonder, "What are you doing?" (v9). That question is my opening to tell them.

Sin to confess — eyes that won't see

I can read Scripture and still not see what God is pointing at in my own life. "Eyes to see but do not see" (v2) describes selective blindness — the habit I won't look at, the relationship I won't name. I'll ask God to show me what I've refused to see.

Warning to heed — "later" is a lie

"The vision that he sees is for many years from now" (v27) is the voice of every postponed surrender. Men in addiction know it well: one more time, I'll quit Monday, I'll deal with it after I'm out. Zedekiah ran in the dark and ran straight into God's net. God's patience is mercy, not permission (2 Pet 3:9). Today is the day (2 Cor 6:2).

Promise to trust — His word will be performed

"For I the LORD will speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed" (v25). The same certainty that made the warnings come true makes the promises sure. The new heart of chapter 11 is just as certain as the fall of chapter 12. For the man who has heard a lifetime of broken promises from people, here is One whose word never fails.

Example to follow — a living sign

Ezekiel let his life become the sermon (vv6, 11). The men I disciple watch how I carry hardship and obedience more than they listen to what I say. In my books, my websites and my time with men, I want my life to say what my words say.

Worship

LORD, You see all and You say what You will do — and then You do it. Your net reaches every fugitive, and Your patience holds back judgment longer than we deserve. Not one word of Yours has ever failed.

Prayer

Lord, open my eyes and ears. Break the "later" in me and in the men I serve — let today be the day we turn. Make my life a sign that points to You. Thank You that every promise in Christ is as sure as every warning, and that Your patience is giving us room to repent. Amen.