

## **Dr. Leslie Allen, Ezekiel, Lecture 4, Messages of Destruction for the Land of Israel, Ezekiel 6:1-7:27**

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This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 4, Messages of Destruction for the Land of Israel. Ezekiel 6.1-7.27.

We come now to Ezekiel chapters 6 and 7. If we glance back at the progression of this first part of the book of Ezekiel, which runs from chapters 1 to 7, we see a series of things happening.

There have been two visions, there have been symbolic actions, and there have been oracles of judgment. And oracles of judgment continue into chapters 6 and 7, but there's a difference. Because of those oracles of judgment we have had were linked with symbolic actions, but essentially, they were Jerusalem-oriented.

They were speaking essentially about Jerusalem, the fate of Jerusalem. But here we move on to think more widely of judgment related to the land. It's the land of Judah, the land of Israel, which is to suffer.

So here we have a series of messages of destruction for the land of Israel. And so, this is the difference that we have from those earlier oracles. The dark shadow of the siege and fall of Jerusalem, the siege began in 588 and concluded in 587, and that shadow still looms over the text implicitly.

And there's still thought of it because in mind is the Babylonian invasion, which eventually focused upon Jerusalem but also featured the capture and destruction of the land. So, we come to chapter 6 and chapter 7. These are two literary units, two prophetic literary units. And we notice that they begin in the same way.

The word of the Lord came to me. And in the book of Ezekiel, this is the way that the book indicates the forward movement with different messages. And this formula, the word of the Lord came to me, it's a formula for receiving a prophetic message.

And over and over again, we're going to see it at the beginning of sections. So, chapter 6 is over against chapter 7. If we look more closely at chapter 6, we see that actually, there are two separate messages incorporated here. And there's 1 to 10.

There's 1 to 10 and then 11 to 14. What tells us that is the formula in verse 3, the speaking formula: hear the word of the Lord God. And that has an introductory meaning on a lesser level of a particular message: hear the word of the Lord.

We then have a similar formula, but not the same, in verse 11. Thus says the Lord God, which we've met a number of times before as a sort of prophetic badge that Ezekiel is to proclaim at the beginning of his messages. And so, two introductory formulas introduce two separate little messages, 1 to 10 and then 11 to 14. And there's something similar about both messages: they begin with physical gestures.

We don't have symbolic actions as such, but we have something approximating to it that there's a certain gesture that Ezekiel is to start with. And in verse 2, set your face toward the mountains of Israel. And this, too, is a formula that we're going to have a number of times as we read through the book of Ezekiel, that Ezekiel is to stare fixedly in the direction of what the message is destined for, is intended for.

And this fixed staring is said, is set your face toward. And then, too, we have another gesture in verse 11: clap your hands and stamp your foot. And it's to be accompanied by a statement, an explanatory statement, alas, for all the vile abominations of the house of Israel.

And we'll look at that gesture, clap your hands and stamp your foot when we come to it in verse 11. But we have this parallelism. And then, too, of course, in both cases, the land of Israel is involved.

So, a number of reasons why these messages have been put together side by side. They're a nice fit. And they're all about a disaster that's to befall the land of Israel.

In verse 3, it says, you mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God. Well, that's obviously a rhetorical address. First of all, mountains don't have ears.

They're not human. And so, they can't hear. But it's to be directed to them.

And there's this rhetorical address that we have to the mountains. The real addressees, of course, behind the rhetorical address are the prisoners of war, those 597 prisoners of war in Babylonia. And they are to hear this message, which Ezekiel declaims, supposedly talking to the mountains hundreds of miles away in Israel.

So, this article against the mountains of Israel, well, why should they be singled out? Why should they merit this address? Well, there are two reasons. It goes on to say in verse 3, thus says the Lord God. Oh, yes, there we are.

You've got that other formula already in verse 3 that you have in verse 11, alongside here the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys. And there's something nostalgic about that listing because all those exiles, those 597 exiles, they're away in Babylonia, the flat plain, stretching for miles and miles.

And they think of their homeland so different, that rugged homeland, mountains and hills, ravines and valleys. And that's the promised land. That was where their ancestors lived.

And that's where they'd like to go back to. And so, there's something special and something poignant there. And this landscape, with all its grandeur, it represents God's gift to Israel.

And so, there's this nostalgic reference to the very landscape. But there's something else because the mountains especially have a rather sinister significance where the later pre-exilic prophets are concerned. Because there were the high places.

We get mentioned at the end of verse 3, I myself will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. And these were local sanctuaries, local places of worship, scattered all up and down Israel. And okay, you had your festival times of going up to Jerusalem, but you had your church around the corner as it were.

And you could worship there when it wasn't festival time. But there were two things against that way of thinking. One, the orthodox theology said that one should worship only in the Jerusalem temple.

And that was very firmly held. And Ezekiel, the priest, would firmly hold to that point of view. And so, there's something automatically wrong with the worship of the high places.

But there was something even more sinister, that these high places were associated with what the more orthodox regarded as idolatrous worship. And why was that? Because they featured images in their worship. And there was Canaanite influence, there was pagan influence in those local churches.

And so that's the reason why they're the object of attack here. And fundamentally and basically, the orthodox faith of Israel said no to religious images. And you remember it goes right back to the Ten Commandments, the beginning of the Ten Commandments, Exodus chapter 20, verses 4 and 5. You shall not make for yourself an idol or an image, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them. And there we are, there's that ban in verses 4 and 5 of chapter 20 of Exodus, the Ten Commandments. But there it was.

You got mention of idols at the end of verse 4 here in Exodus chapter 6. And so those images automatically spelled trouble where orthodox theology of the Old Testament was concerned. And so, this is the basis for this message of destruction. Your altars shall become desolate; your incense shall be broken.

I will throw down your slain in front of your idols. I will lay the corpses of the people of Israel in front of their idols. I will scatter your bones around your altars.

Now, this speaks of destruction, but it also speaks of something else. Because these high places would be rendered unclean by the presence of these corpses and bones, and so they couldn't really be used for worship any more.

And so, there's this fate of uncleanness. No longer could they be used for worship, irrespective of the fact of slaughter. So, there are two features there.

And wherever you live, your town should be wasted and your high places ruined. So that your altars will be wasted and ruined. Your idols broken and destroyed.

Your incense stands are cut down. And the slain shall fall in your midst. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

The interesting thing here is that this message is divided into two. In one to ten. And the first half ends in verse seven.

And, of course, the clue, if you look closely, is the recognition formula. The book of Ezekiel typically ends with a message of judgment. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

In the face of all this defiling and destruction of the high places on the mountains of Israel, you shall know that I am the Lord. And there's to be this lesson learned from this bad experience of the reality of God and the purity of worship that God expects. But then there's a second phase of this overall message.

And that, too, is going to end with a recognition formula in verse ten. They shall know that I am the Lord. I did not threaten in vain to bring this disaster upon them.

And in vain means without due cause. Without just cause. I didn't threaten without just cause to bring this disaster upon them.

But in verse eight, we have the second phase of this first message. I will spare some. And that sounds very reassuring.

But in these judgment oracles, exile appears a bad thing, as it obviously was. Who wants to leave home and live hundreds of miles away? And so this is the fate of exile, which some people are concerned about. And verse nine, those who escape shall remember me among the nations where they are carried captive.

How I was crushed by their wanton heart that turned away from me. And their wanton eyes that turned after their idols. Then they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed for all their abominations.

And they shall know that I am the Lord. And so on. Now there are two features here.

In many cases, when people suffer, they do so on two levels. They do so on the physical level. Something bad happens to them.

But that isn't the end. There's a sort of a psychological aftermath. And they live remembering it.

They live regretting it. They live with the grief of that situation on their minds for a long time. And so, there can be two types of suffering.

And for the exiles, there's this second type of suffering along with the first. Not only will they be forced from their homes, but there's going to be this deep grief and regret. And so, there's an emphasis on this second type of sort of psychological suffering.

And there's a sort of a chain in this psychological suffering. They're going to remember, first of all, it's going to be a bad memory when they think about the reason why they've been chucked out of their homeland. There's going to be remorse. There's going to be a sense of guilt about the wrong choices that have been made and also their effect on God.

And we'll mention that later in a moment. There's going to be regret, a sense of loss, an awareness of the consciousness of the consequences of their choice. And then lastly, there's going to be a recognition that God has been at work in this situation, and it had to be.

It had to be. One interesting feature comes in the middle of verse 9, how I was crushed by their wanton heart that turned away from me. In the middle of this statement, in the NIV, I describe how I have been grieved by adulterous hearts.

And obviously, there's mention of God's grief here. This is interesting because there's human grief that this had to happen, but there's a sense, too, that God has been grieved. And that comes over very strongly here, that God has been harmed, that God has been psychologically hurt too in all this experience.

So, God, too, is a sort of victim of this exile. In different languages, we'll find this thought taken up in later chapters: God's loss, God's own loss, God's psychological loss, even as the people were expelled from that land.

It wasn't an easy thing for God to do, and it left a residue of deep grief in God's own heart, and it had to happen. We sometimes say to children, this hurts me more than it hurts you. And virtually, this is what God is saying here.

But then we come to the second oracle in 11 to 14, introduced by this messenger formula and introduced too by this physical gesture. Clap your hands and stamp your feet. Now you've always got to ask where gestures are concerned, what they mean in different cultures.

There are some cultures where you nod your head, and that means no. So, you have to be very careful going to foreign parts in what you do. And we might say, well, clapping your hands, you know, we do that when we're happy.

But no, there is a situation. Think of a teacher in front of an unruly class. What does he do? A single clap.

And then, ah, they're called to order. And it's his objection, calling to attention. I want you to shut up.

And so, he does that by a single clap of the hand. And so I think it's like that. Clap your hand once and then stamp your foot.

And then stamp your foot, which is obviously hostile. This clapping of hands here expresses God's anger. We get an explicit mention of God's anger in terms of my fury at the end of verse 12.

And it's going to express that. And both of these gestures, the stamping of the foot and the clapping of hands is God's indignation, his anger at this whole situation. So, there were mixed reactions with God, grief, and anger.

Sometimes, parents have a wayward child, and they're angry with that child, but they're also grieving that the child has done such a thing, and they can't really understand it. And there are mixed emotions with God, too. We have the grief in verse nine, and then we have the anger in verses 11 and following, and they belong together.

And then, along with it, he's to cry out, alas, for all the vile abominations of the house of Israel. And there's a bit of grief there, an expression of grief there too, alas, at the coming disaster. There are going to be three forms of punishment.

Dying by the sword, by famine and pestilence, end of verse 11. And this is developed in the next verse. And we didn't mention it, but we also had it in 5:12, and a number of times, there's this elaboration of the physical suffering of the different ways people are going to die.

By the sword, obviously the sword of the enemy. By famine, this is in a context of siege where there's no access to food outside the cities. And then plague, plague breaking out as there's a lack of hygiene and germs develop and it's all an unhealthy situation.

And so, these are the three sorts of sinister agents that we find here and also in earlier on in 5:12. But then accusation gets woven in, in verse 13, that they shall know, you shall know that I am the Lord. In a way, this is the end of this little message that began in verse 11.

Then it expands when you get this accusation woven into the judgment message. And then, in verse 14, you have God's intervention. Remember we were speaking about the judgment oracle, and the punishment side is shown in two ways.

By God's personal intervention into the situation in a negative way and also by human consequences. And so, in this intervention in verse 14, I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste through all their settlements. And so, in verse 13, you've got the recognition formula, and then you've got that expansion in terms of accusation.

No, in terms of the human consequences moving on in 13. And then you've got the divine intervention in 14. And you have the extent of the destruction of the land from the wilderness, that's the wilderness to the south of Judah, up to Riblah, way up in Syria.

That whole extent of the land is going to suffer at the hands of the Babylonians. But behind the Babylonians stands God as the agent. It's God stretching out his own hand against them in that invasion and destruction.

And then a closing recognition formula. Then they shall know that I am the Lord. At long last they'll learn by experience what they couldn't learn in any other way.

They will learn by bitter experience about the reality of God, where God's will lies, and where it should have taken them. And then chapter 7. Oh no, but before we move to chapter 7, there's another agenda to what we've been reading that we haven't mentioned before. It's an agenda that started out in chapter 4, moved into chapter 5, and comes into a crescendo in chapter 6. And that's a dependence upon the covenant curses in Leviticus 26.

I think at some point I mentioned that, perhaps in the introduction. But here, it comes out most strongly in chapter 6. Leviticus 26 has two halves: a happy half and a sad half. And the happy half is the blessings that follow on covenant obedience, obeying God's covenant rulings.

But then the other side is covenant curses. And in that second half, that's what's being echoed in chapters 4 and 5 and supremely in chapter 6. And that's a priestly text that sets out the penalties for breaking the covenant. And so, here's another indication of how Ezekiel is the priest prophet and how he is picking up from a priestly text, from the Torah, terms that are being used here.

And especially, especially, well, we'll carry on, I think, yes, yeah, we can look at it now. Leviticus 26, verses 30 to 33. There's a group of verses there of covenant curses.

And if you keep looking at, I'm reading from Leviticus 26 from verse 30, I will destroy your high places, it says. Well, that was picked up word for word in verse 3 of Ezekiel 6, wasn't it? At the end, I will destroy your high places. And I think it will come a little bit later, too.

I can't quite remember, but it's certainly there. I will destroy your high places, and I will cut down your incense altars. Well, your incense stands. I think that's the same Hebrew word, but we've got a different translator here.

We'll be broken and cut down. It says in verse 4 and then in verse 7. And in verse 31 of Leviticus 26, I will lay your cities waste. And that reappears in verse 6 here: wherever you live, your town shall be waste.

It's the same Hebrew word: towns and cities. And then, in Leviticus 31, 26, 31, I will not smell your pleasing odors. Sometimes, sacrifices of worship are offered to God. God appreciates that roast meat—mmm, delicious.

And so, he accepts that sacrifice. And that's an idiom, a metaphor that's sometimes used. I will not smell your pleasing odors.

Well, if we look at verse 13, it speaks of these high places, where they offered pleasing odors to all their idols. And there we are. These were images of God, images of Yahweh, but they were rejected by God himself and by the Orthodox in Judah.

And then, in verse 32, I will devastate the land. And that too is in verse 13. Well, it's in 14, I will make the land desolate.

I will make the land desolate. And lastly, in verse 33, I will, you, I will scatter among the nations. And that's in verse 8, you will be scattered through the countries.

And so pretty obviously, you're, there's a picking up of Leviticus 26. And the prophet, who's also a priest, can reinforce his message by going back to this priestly literature



and say, there it is, there it is, you should have known from the very start where this was going to land you in. And it gives extra authority and authenticity to his message.

And so, there's that extra agenda there. We move to chapter 7 of Ezekiel. And here again, we have a continuation of the theme of the destruction of the land, not merely Jerusalem, though how can one say merely Jerusalem of its capital, but the land too is going to be destroyed.

Chapter 7 is the next literary unit. You get this introduction: The word of the Lord came to me, which is the standard way of introducing a new literary unit. It incorporates a series of separate messages that have been joined together. You can tell the boundaries of those messages in verse 2: Thus says the Lord God to the land of Israel.

And you can tell as well by the end of verse 4, that recognition formula, then you shall know that I am the Lord. So that's the first message. And then verse 5, you're moving on.

And verse 5 says, thus says the Lord God. And so there it is again. And then verse 9 ends with a recognition formula, closing the oracle of judgment, then you shall know it is I the Lord who strike.

And then we haven't got an introduction in verse 10. But you already know that verse 9 is has been a conclusion. But 10 through 27 is our is our last message.

And that ends, it indicates its ending by the recognition formula, and they shall know that I am the Lord in verse 27. And so this is part remember, I use the phrase radical theocentricity. And these messages of judgment, they all point back to God.

They're all a revelation of God. And in the end, it's not just something happening, or something that even though God has done, but there's teaching about God. And there's a recognition as to who God is.

And so very much, God is at the center of this book. Right going back to verse seven, we're told that the land of Israel is being addressed here. And in the actual message in the second half of us to an end, the end has come upon the four corners of the land.

Now, the end is upon you. I will let loose my anger against you. You notice three times that word end.

In Hebrew writing, you always have to notice the repetition. If words are repeated, that's a very solid indication that you take that word very seriously. And it's the theme of what's being said.

So, always look for repetitions. And here are three times an end, the end, the end. And this, actually, picks up from earlier prophecy.

In chapter six, an emphasis on a priestly text, Leviticus 26. Now an emphasis on a prophetic text. And the one that we turn to is in the book of Amos.

And it's chapter eight. And it's verse two. What did Amos say, the end has come upon my people, Israel; I will never again pass them by.

They've had their chances. They've blown them. This is the absolute end now. The end has come upon my people, Israel; I will never again pass them by.

And within the context of the book of Amos, this is speaking of course of the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC. But canonically, it's also pointing forward to the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the southern kingdom in 587. It's the end again.

And it's interesting because there seems to be an awareness. There's a little clue. And Ezekiel is saying, I know I'm quoting from Amos.

And there's a little word there in verse three: now the end is upon you. Of course, Amos 8:2, literally was speaking about the northern kingdom. And now it's your turn.

Now it's your turn. And so, an interesting hint there is that the prophet is using an older text, an older prophetic text. And so, this corroborates his authority and authenticity that he can harness these older texts, whether priestly or prophetic, and make use of them again and say, this obviously is God's will, as it was then, so it is now.

It's the turn of the southern kingdom. And then we move on. Verses five to nine are a separate oracle that we saw, a separate message, but it's very parallel, very much parallel to verses two through four.

And it's because of that parallelism that they've been put side to side. And you notice it picks up the end again, and in this case it mentions it twice. Verse six, an end has come, the end has come.

And this is looking forward, looking ahead to what's going to happen. But it also uses another keyword in verse seven. The time has come, the end, sorry, the day is near.

Now, the day is near. Again, this is harking back to earlier prophecy, earlier prophetic books. The first reference, reminiscence, is to the book of Amos again.

And it's Amos chapter five and verses 18 and 20. And we have the first mention, historically, in scripture of the day of the Lord in Amos. And obviously, his northern constituency thought of it as the day when God is going to intervene on our side and conquer our enemies, and everything is going to be wonderful.

And Amos says, no, sorry, sorry, the day of the Lord is going to be coming. The time when God appears in history, the presence of God, but it's going to be a negative presence for you. So, in Amos 5:18, alas, for you who desire the day of the Lord.

Why do you want the day of the Lord? It's darkness and not light. And there's an irony. They've got the wrong expectation, not sunshine for you, but darkness.

And then he goes on later in verse 20, is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light and gloom with no brightness in it. And so, there's this sinister reference. This expectation of God intervening on Israel's side is turned into this despairing reference to God coming in judgment against his people. So that's one thing, the day of the Lord being picked up.

But interestingly, it says a little bit more about that. The day is near, the day is near. And if you know your Old Testament prophets, you know that Zephaniah, Zephaniah spoke of the nearness of the day of the Lord.

As Zephaniah 1 and verse 7, be silent before the Lord God for the day of the Lord is at hand. The day of the Lord is at hand. And in verse 14 of Zephaniah 1, the great day of the Lord is near and hastening fast.

And there it is, that nearness of the day of the Lord. And it was said in a very powerful passage about the day of the Lord and its darkness. And so, Zephaniah is depending on Amos and developing Amos.

And then Ezekiel is leaning back upon both Amos and Zephaniah. And so, he harnesses these prophetic authorities and his bright heroes, prisoners of war, the elite of Jerusalem, they know these texts. And they, oh, oh yes, Amos, oh yes, Zephaniah.

And we've got to follow in their wake and come with the knowledge that the exiles, those prisoners of war, have and see what Ezekiel is saying. So, 5-9 is a sort of a rerun of 2-4 to a large extent. 5-9 is parallel to 2-4, even though it's a separate message.

And we've seen that day harking back to those two prophets. And it goes on to say, the time has come, the day is near of tumult, not of reveling on the mountains. And mountains were where the high places were.

That's where the harvest festivals would be held. And that's where the great festival will be held. And there'd be a lot of reverie and partying in God's name.

And Ezekiel saying, ah, it's not that sort of noise. It's an invading army. It's an invading army and all the noise that they make in destroying their foes.

And so, it's associated with warfare. Right. And so, we've got, one thing I didn't say was that we've got a series of you's here.

Y-O-U. You, you, you. And we had it earlier in chapter 7. The land is upon you.

I will let loose my anger upon you. Now, this is the land. It mentions the land.

Presumably, it's a metaphor for the people of the land. But the interesting thing is that in verse 4, the end of verse 4, when it comes to the recognition formula, that isn't, in the Hebrew it's different. Because you had been a second feminine singular pronoun referring to the land, which is a feminine noun.

But then you come to the recognition formula, and that is the second masculine plural. So that's a reference to the prisoners of war. So, those who are actually listening to what Ezekiel is saying.

You, in your exile, shall know when this happens in 587 or so, to the land of Judah. So, you're getting this differentiation. And then in verse 6, you've got a you, which is the land again, it's feminine singular.

And then verse 7 is actually a second masculine singular because it goes with, Oh, inhabitant of the land. That's a collective singular. And so, you, times, goes closely with that.

And then, in verse 8, you go back to the feminine singulars, and it's the land again. But then that final in verse 9, you shall know, that's a reference to the prisoners of war in Babylonia. So, you're getting this diversity, which you cannot indicate in an English version unless you're going to have a whole set of footnotes indicating, ah, different addressee here.

And so, you've got these rhetorical addressees of the land and the inhabitants of the land. And then you've got the real addressees of the prisoners of war. So that's how it goes.

Now 10 to 27 is the next article. It's the third one, strictly in chapter 7. But it does fall into two halves. It's very much linked with what's gone before.

One indication is the word day comes again. You've got in verse 10, see the day, see it come. And so that's a good reason why it's been set with that previous message.

And then in verse 12, day again, the time has come, the day draws near. And then lastly, in verse 19, on the day of the wrath of the Lord. And there it is.

So, there's a link up with that literary context, which is very nice. But if you look closely, you'll see that this message falls into two halves. And you can see that because there's a parallelism between them.

We saw that those separate oracles, 2 to 4 and 5 to 9, were separate messages, but they were parallel. Well, this is one message, but it's two halves. And there's a parallelism between those two, in point of fact.

And we shall see this. There are three factors that are parallel. Verses 12 and 13, you have the futility of commerce.

There's going to be no more commerce in verses 12 and 13. Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn. The sellers shall not return to what has been sold as long as they remain alive.

It's talking about commerce and an interruption in commerce. No more normality of life, of trading. And then in verse 9, verse 19 rather, there's a sort of link because you've got a reference to silver and gold, silver and gold.

And that's what's used in commerce. And so, there's that parallelism there. There's going to be a loss of wealth.

They shall fling their silver into the streets. Their gold shall be treated as unclean. Why? Because there's nothing to buy anymore.

In all this destruction, you can't buy food, you can't buy goods, and there's nothing to buy. The whole economy has collapsed. So that's one set of parallels.

Then, in 14 to 16, we mention war and death, blowing the horn. But nobody goes to defend themselves. It's all too late.

The sword is outside. Pestilence and famine are inside. Outside the city, there are troops clamoring to come in with their swords.

But meanwhile, these other agents of God, remember sword, pestilence and famine, pestilence and famine are breaking out inside the city. So those in the field die by the sword. Those in the city, famine and pestilence devour them.

So, wherever they are, they're going to die. And so, this is the result of war, invasion, and siege. And then in 21 to 24, once again, we have mention of invasion and destruction.

These strangers, these foreign troops who come in the violence who profane the treasured place, and so on. And so that's the second parallel, these military parallels. And the third one, in 17 and 18, you've got general demoralization and mourning and the effect upon the people that they feel they can't cope anymore in 17 and 18.

All hands shall grow feeble. All knees turn to water. They should put on sackcloth.

Horror shall cover them. Shame should be on all faces. Baldness on all their heads.

Shaving your head is a sign of mourning. And then, in 26 and 27, there's general consternation. 26 and 27, they shall keep seeking a vision from the prophet.

Nobody's got one. Instruction shall perish from the priest. Counsel from the elders.

The king shall mourn. The prince shall be wrapped in despair. The hands of the people of the land shall tremble.

And so, once again, this sense of hopelessness and consternation. And so, as you go through, in each case, you've got this parallelism working itself out. And so, this reinforcement of this basic idea, ideas in two ways.

Back in verse 12, let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn. Well, this is talking about the normality of life when you have commercial transactions. There's the excitement of buying something new.

Ah, just what I wanted. And you feel terribly excited when you buy something that you really want. And so, let not the buyer rejoice.

It's not going to happen anymore. You're not going to be buying anything. And then, too, over against that, there's the seller nor the seller mourn.

There might be a reluctance on the part of the seller. The seller needs the money, but he's got to part with something that's been part of him for so long, and he's got to sell it. And there's a reluctance there, giving up something they've owned for a long time.

And so, both these reactions are to be things of the past when this disaster strikes. Verse 19, this stumbling block of their iniquity. It speaks of this silver and gold, which have been used to make beautiful images and wonderful images, expressing the true worship of God.

But no, no, no, no, no images. And so, their silver and gold had been wrongly used. It was the stumbling block of their iniquity.

And so, there would become a time when they couldn't use it. There's nothing to buy, and the whole economy has collapsed. Silver and gold will become useless, no longer to be used.

And it's wrong worship that's to blame—coming back to this theme we had in the earlier chapter of this image, use of images. And verse 23 has got a moral accusation.

The land is full of bloody crimes. The city is full of violence. And so, it wasn't simply a religious sin that was the cause of the Babylonian invasion from God's point of view, but it was a general reluctance to work at those moral injunctions of the old covenant tradition.

And there are bloody crimes and violence, and not the sort of covenant nation that God had wanted at all. And so, very much, this is a fighting chapter. We have to get beneath the surface and realize that this is addressed to those prisoners of war, this elite of Jerusalem, who very much loved their land and very much harked back in their minds to the normality of life there.

And they hoped that they would be going back to it. Once again, life would go back to normal, and they would enjoy life as they'd enjoyed it before. And so, this chapter is a very loud, no, it's not going to happen.

This is the end of the road for the old normal way of life in Judah. It's a time of reckoning now, a time for sins to be punished. Religious sins and social sins.

And in spirit, I think it's parallel in a way to Galatians chapter 6 and verse 7. God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. And this thought's being developed here, that it's your own fault. You've been there, and the situation has been so bad, and it's your own fault.

And God has to intervene. Of course, in Galatians 6-7, it's judgment with a lower case. But here, of course, it's judgment with a capital J. Well, this brings us to the end of the first part of the book, chapters 1-7.

And we've had the vision and commissioning of Ezekiel as a prophet of judgment. We had those signs, those symbolic acts, which are explained in terms of the coming fall of Jerusalem. And then we've had oracles of judgment, a number of oracles of judgment, which speak of the invasion and destruction of Judah as God's providential work of judgment.

And so, the overall lesson is, once again, it's a protest against what the prisoners of war of 597 were thinking. They were thinking that they would go home. And so, this is really saying there's worse to come.

There's worse to come. The end is coming. And it's going to be realized in the fall of Jerusalem in 587, and it's going to be realized in the wholesale destruction of the land.

And so, whether the exiles of 597 wanted to hear it or not, this was the message they had to listen. But when it happened, they would come to their senses. They would start listening.

They would say, oh, Ezekiel was right after all. God was speaking through him. And they would realize that God had been at work in the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Judah.

Remember that Ezekiel has been drawing on these two traditions to bolster his message. One is the priestly tradition of the curses of Leviticus 26, and the other is the prophetic tradition of the day of the Lord in Amos and Zephaniah. And so, there's a lot in these chapters.

We find Ezekiel sort of coming to life, and we can see how God is speaking through him when we look at it in detail and compare it with other scriptures. Next time, our chapters will be 8 through 11. That is quite a lot to study.

But the more you know about them, the better I hope you will appreciate what I have to say about them. Thank you.

This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 4, Messages of Destruction for the Land of Israel. Ezekiel 6.1-7.27.