

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 6

This chapter contains a prophecy of the desolation of the whole land of Israel, and a promise that a remnant should escape, with a lamentation for the sad destruction, signified by some gestures of the prophet. The order to the prophet to deliver out the prophecy is in (^{<3000>}Ezekiel 6:1,2); the several parts of the land of Israel or Judea, to which the prophecy is directed, are signified by mountains, hills, rivers, and valleys, on which the sword should be brought, (^{<3003>}Ezekiel 6:3); the desolation is described, and the cause of it suggested, the idolatry of the people, (^{<3004>}Ezekiel 6:4-7); the promise of a remnant that should escape, who should remember the Lord, loath themselves for their sins, acknowledge him, and that his word was not in vain, is in (^{<3008>}Ezekiel 6:8-10); the lamentation, signified by the prophet's smiting with his hand, and stamping with his foot, for the sins of the people, and the judgments that should come upon them, is in (^{<3011>}Ezekiel 6:11); a particular enumeration of these judgments follows, and of the places where they should be executed, (^{<3012>}Ezekiel 6:12); the end of them was to bring them to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord, against whom they had sinned and offended by their idolatry, as the places where their slain fell would show, (^{<3013>}Ezekiel 6:13); and the chapter is concluded with a resolution to bring this desolation on them, (^{<3014>}Ezekiel 6:14).

Ver. 1. *And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying.*] That is, the word of prophecy from the Lord, as the Targum: this, according to Junius, was delivered out by the prophet on a sabbath day, the twenty first of the fifth month, and in the sixth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity; and so was more than a year after the vision at Chebar, (^{<3000>}Ezekiel 1:1,2).

Ver. 2. *Son of man, set thy face towards the mountains of Israel, &c.*] Or cities of Israel, the inhabitants of them; not the ten tribes, for they had been carried captive long before this time, even in the times of Hezekiah; unless it can be thought that this prophecy is designed to show the reason of their captivity, which was their idolatry; or that it is directed to those of them which remained in the land, and were mixed with the other tribes; but

rather the land of Judea is intended, in which were many mountains, and one part of it was called the hill country, (~~Q13~~ Luke 1:39,65); and the mountains are mentioned, against which the prophet is ordered to direct his face, and look unto; partly because idolatry was much practised upon them; and partly to show the stupidity of the Jews, and the failure of the prophecy among them; that it was as well, or better, to speak to the mountains, than to them; for since they had so often put away the word of God from them, they were unworthy of it; wherefore such a direction to the prophet comes some degree of indignation and resentment:

and prophesy against them; as that the sword should be upon them, and the high places built upon them should be destroyed: or “unto them”^{f96}; direct the prophecy to them; speak to them as if they were capable of hearing: or “concerning them”, as the Syriac version; and so the Targum, concerning their desolation.

Ver. 3. *And say, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God,* &c.] Since the people of the Jews would not hear the word of the Lord, the mountains are called upon to hear it; unless the inhabitants of the mountains are meant:

thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys: these are addressed, because idols were worshipped here; as upon the mountains and hills, so by rivers of water, and also in valleys, as in the valley of Hinnom idols were worshipped; upon mountains and hills, because they thought themselves nearer to heaven; by rivers, because of purity; and in valleys, because shady and obscure, and had something solemn and venerable in them:

behold I, [even] I, will bring a sword upon you; that is, upon the idolaters, which worshipped in these places; otherwise different instruments, as pick axes, &c. would have been more proper. The Targum paraphrases it,

“them that kill with the sword;”

meaning the Chaldeans, who doubtless are intended:

and I will destroy your high places; the temples and altars, built on high places, and devoted to idolatrous worship, as follows:

Ver. 4. *And your altars shall be desolate*, &c.] Being pulled down; or because the priests and worshippers would now be slain, and there would be none to attend them:

and your images shall be broken; the “images of the sun”^{f97}. The word for images has its derivation from heat; and were so called, either from the heat of the sun, to whose worship they were devoted, or from the heat of the love and affections of their worshippers:

and I will cast down your slain [men] before your idols; before your dung, or your “dunhill gods”^{f98}; for the word used has the signification of dung, (^{<3012>}Ezekiel 4:12). The Targum renders it,

“before the carcass of your idols;”

where they committed idolatry, there they should be slain; which points at the cause of their punishment.

Ver. 5. *And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols*, &c.] Which is repeated for the confirmation of it:

and I will scatter your bones round about your altars: which were reckoned a pollution of them; (see ^{<1234>}2 Kings 23:14,16,20).

Ver. 6. *In all your dwelling places your cities shall be laid waste*, &c.] Which denotes that the desolation should be general, wherever they had cities and places to dwell in; the idolatry being universal, as is said in (^{<3128>}Jeremiah 2:28);

and the high places shall be desolate; meaning such as were in cities; as, before, such as were built upon mountains and hills; (see ^{<1235>}2 Kings 23:5);

that your altars may be laid waste and desolate; as they must be, the cities being destroyed in which they were set up:

and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down; such as were made of gold and silver, or of wood and stone; the same words are used for them as in (^{<3101>}Ezekiel 6:4);

and your works may be abolished; not only the works of their hands, but of their brain; whatever they had devised, and was contrary to the pure word and worship of God.

Ver. 7. *And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, &c.]* The word for slain is in the singular number, which perhaps is put for the plural; and so the Septuagint renders it; unless it should design some principal person that should be slain; but, as King Zedekiah was not slain when the city was taken, only his sons and his princes, it seems best to understand it of the multitude that were slain in the midst of the land, not only in Jerusalem, but in all the cities of Judea; and denotes how general and public the destruction would be:

and ye shall know that I [am] the Lord; the only true God, and Governor of the world; who only is to be worshipped, feared, and served, and not idols.

Ver. 8. *Yet will I leave a remnant, &c.]* Not in Judea, but in Babylon, and in the countries where they should be dispersed, as follows:

that ye may have [some] that shall escape the sword among the nations; which was threatened to be drawn, and sent after them, (^{CHAP}Ezekiel 5:2,12); but all should not perish by it; some should escape; for this was not the time to make a full end of them:

when ye shall be scattered through the countries; that is, of Egypt, Ammon, Moab, and Assyria; for this respects their dispersion at the time of the Babylonish captivity, and not their present dispersion.

Ver. 9. *And they that escape of you shall remember me, &c.]* Either my grace and mercy to them, as Jarchi; or the fear of me, as the Targum; and so return by repentance, and worship the Lord their God, being influenced by his kindness and goodness to them: even when

among the nations, whither they shall be carried captive; so that their afflictions should be sanctified and made useful to them: in prosperity men are apt to forget God; in adversity they are brought to a sense of themselves and duty; and happy it is when chastening dispensations are teaching ones, and bring to God, and not drive from him:

because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me: by committing spiritual adultery, which is idolatry. The sense is, either that he was grieved at heart with their idolatry, which was the reason of their being carried captive, which, when they were sensible of, wrought repentance in them; or that he was full of compassion towards them; his

heart was tender and pitiful towards them, though they departed from him in such a dreadful manner, justly to be resented by him. The Targum is,

“I have broken their foolish heart;”

and so the Syriac and Vulgate Latin versions, “I have broken their whorish heart”; by afflictive providences humbled them, and brought them to repentance:

and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols; they committed fornication with their heart and eyes in a spiritual sense, as wicked men do in a natural sense; (see ^{<6024>}2 Peter 2:14);

and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations; abominable idolatry, (^{<6043>}1 Peter 4:3); when men remember God, against whom they have sinned, and consider how grievous sin is to him; and when they are broken for it themselves, they then loathe their sins, and themselves for it; and where all this is there is true repentance.

Ver. 10. *And they shall know that I [am] the Lord, &c.*] As in (^{<2607>}Ezekiel 6:7);

[and that] I have not said in vain; either within himself, in his own purposes and decrees; so the Targum,

“I have not in vain decreed in my word;”

or by the mouth of the prophets:

that I would do this evil unto them; in carrying them captive, and dispersing them in other lands; for this is not the evil of sin, but the evil of punishment, or of affliction.

Ver. 11. *Thus saith the Lord God, smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, &c.*] These are gestures of persons in distress and agony, who, to show their trouble and grief, smite one hand against the other; or smite with the hand upon the thigh, as in (^{<2619>}Jeremiah 31:19); and “stretch out”, or “make a distension with the foot”^{f99}; as it is in the Hebrew text; extend their thighs; throw out their feet; stamp with them; beat the earth, and make it shake, as the Syriac version; all expressive of anguish and sorrow:

and say, alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! the word “alas”, or “woe”, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, an interjection

of mourning and lamentation, explains the above gestures; and what follows shows the cause of all; namely, the sins and abominations committed by the house of Israel; which they being insensible of, and unconcerned about, the prophet is ordered to take such a method to awaken them out of their stupidity and lethargy; and the rather, since the heaviest of judgments were coming upon them:

for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; which are threatened in (²⁰⁶²Ezekiel 5:12,16,17); and the persons on whom they should be separately executed are mentioned in (²⁰⁶²Ezekiel 6:12).

Ver. 12. *He that is far off shall die of the pestilence, &c.*] That flies from the enemy into the wilderness, or into other countries, thinking himself safe there, the plague shall seize him, and he shall die of that; there is no fleeing from God, and escaping his hand; when he resolves to punish for sin, he has various ways to execute his wrath:

and he that is near shall fall by the sword; that is out of the city, and near it, attempting to get away; but within the reach of the enemy, shall be slain by him:

and he that remaineth, and is besieged, shall die by the famine; that abides in the city, and does not attempt to go out; but continues in the siege, hoping the enemy will be obliged to depart, shall perish by the grievous famine. The Targum is,

“he that remains, and goes into the cities of siege, shall die with famine:”

thus will I accomplish my fury upon them; which before had been gradually, by little and little, falling upon them, in order to bring them to repentance; but being incorrigible, wrath is brought upon them to the uttermost; and God fulfils the whole counsel of his will in their destruction.

Ver. 13. *Then shall ye know that I [am] the Lord, &c.*] Whom they had denied, by serving other gods; but now by those punishments their eyes would be opened to see, and be obliged to acknowledge, that there was no God but the Lord:

when their slain [men] shall be among their idols round about their altars; as is threatened, (²⁰⁶⁵Ezekiel 6:5); by which it will appear that the idols whom they worshipped could not save them; since they should fall

just by them, round about the altars on which they sacrificed unto them; which idols were placed, and altars for their worship built,

upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains: mountains and high hills were usual places of idolatry among the Heathens, in which the Jews imitated them, and particularly Herodotus^{f100} says of the Persians, that, going up to the highest parts of mountains, they offered sacrifice to Jupiter; so they called the whole circle of the heavens:

and under every green tree, and under every thick oak; (see <1143>1 Kings 14:23 <1204>2 Kings 16:4 <3421>Jeremiah 2:20 3:6); here their slain were to fall, where they committed their idolatry: even in

the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols; or dunghill gods; yet, though they were such, sweet savour or incense was offered to them; wherefore, in righteous judgment, here their carcasses should fill and lie, and rot and stink.

Ver. 14. *So will I stretch out mine hand upon them,* &c.] Not unto them, in a way of mercy; but upon, or against them, in a way of judgment. The Targum paraphrases it,

“and I will lift up the stroke of my power upon them;”

his mighty hand of vengeance:

and make the land desolate; by destroying the inhabitants of it:

yea, more desolate than the wilderness towards Diblath, in all their habitations; so the Syriac version renders it, “and I will make this land more desolate than the land of Diblath”; but other versions, “I will make the land desolate from the wilderness of Diblath”; to which the Targum agrees; or, “from the wilderness to Diblath”: Kimchi and Ben Melech think this is the same with Riblath; as Deuel is put for Reuel in (<0014>Numbers 1:14 2:14); which was in the land of Hamath, and which, Jerom says, was in his times called Epiphania in Syria; here it was that Nebuchadnezzar brought Zedekiah, and slew his sons before him, (<2916>Jeremiah 39:5,6); this, though in Hamath in Syria, was on the borders of the land of Israel, (<0348>Numbers 34:8,11); so that “hence from the desert of Diblath”, as the Arabic version renders it, “even to Jerusalem”, as may be supplied, takes in the whole land, and shows that it should be utterly desolate. There is a Bethdiblathaim mentioned in (<2482>Jeremiah 48:22); as in Moab; and there is

also Almondiblathaim, which was one of the stations of the Israelites; and seems to be in Moab, or on its borders, (~~06346~~ Numbers 33:46,47); and appears, by the places named with it, to be the same as that in Jeremiah; and so was part of that terrible wilderness through which the Israelites passed; and to which the desolation of the land of Israel by the Chaldeans is compared; and which serves to confirm our version, which makes the desolation to be greater than that:

and they shall know that I [am] the Lord; the true God; the one and only Lord God; who never changes his purposes; fulfils his promises and threatenings; and there is no escaping his mighty hand.