

Ezekiel 17 Commentary

PREVIOUS

Michelangelo's Ezekiel on the Sistine Chapel

NEXT

Click chart to enlarge

Click chart to enlarge
 Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[Click Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

CHRONOLOGY OF EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES

PROPHECY OF JUDGMENT The LORD is not there		PROPHECY OF RESTORATION The LORD is There		
FATE OF JUDAH Before the Siege		FOES OF JUDAH During the Siege		FUTURE OF JUDAH After the Siege
593-588 BC		587-586		586-571
7 YEARS OF PROPHECYING HORROR & NO HOPE			15 YEARS OF PROPHECYING HOPE	
Ezekiel 1:1-3:27 Ezekiel Sees the Glory & Receives the Call	Ezekiel 4:1-24:27 Judgments Against Judah	Ezekiel 25:1-32:32 Judgments Against the Gloating Nations	Ezekiel 33:1-39:29 Restoration of Israel to the LORD	Ezekiel 40:1-48:35 Visions of the Temple Jehovah Shammah

Outline of the Book of Ezekiel from Dr John MacArthur - The book can be largely divided into sections about condemnation/retribution and then consolation/restoration. A more detailed look divides the book into 4 sections. First, are prophecies on the ruin of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1:1–24:27). Second, are prophecies of retribution on nearby nations (Ezekiel 25:1–32:32), with a glimpse at God's future restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 28:25,26). Thirdly, there is a transition chapter (Ezekiel 33:1-33) which gives instruction concerning a last call for Israel to repent. Finally, the fourth division includes rich expectations involving God's future restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 34:1–48:35). ([Reference](#))

I. Prophecies of Jerusalem's Ruin (Ezekiel 1:1–24:27)

A. Preparation and Commission of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1–3:27)

1. Divine appearance to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1–28)
2. Divine assignment to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1–3:27)

B. Proclamation of Jerusalem's Condemnation (Ezekiel 4:1–24:27)

1. Signs of coming judgment (Ezekiel 4:1–5:4)
2. Messages concerning judgment (Ezekiel 5:5–7:27)
3. Visions concerning abomination in the city and temple (Ezekiel 8:1–11:25)
4. Explanations of judgment (Ezekiel 12:1–24:27)

II. Prophecies of Retribution to the Nations (Ezekiel 25:1–32:32)

- A. Ammon (Ezekiel 25:1–7)
- B. Moab (Ezekiel 25:8–11)
- C. Edom (Ezekiel 25:12–14)
- D. Philistia (Ezekiel 25:15–17)
- E. Tyre (Ezekiel 26:1–28:19)

- F. Sidon (Ezekiel 28:20–24)
- Excursus: The Restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 28:25, 26)
- G. Egypt (Ezekiel 29:1–32:32)

III. Provision for Israel's Repentance (Ezekiel 33:1–33)

IV. Prophecies of Israel's Restoration (Ezekiel 34:1–48:35)

A. Regathering of Israel to the Land (Ezekiel 34:1–37:28)

1. Promise of a True Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:1–31)
2. Punishment of the nations (Ezekiel 35:1–36:7)
3. Purposes of restoration (Ezekiel 36:8–38)
4. Pictures of restoration—dry bones and two sticks (Ezekiel 37:1–28)

B. Removal of Israel's Enemies from the Land (Ezekiel 38:1–39:29)

1. Invasion of Gog to plunder Israel (Ezekiel 38:1–16)
2. Intervention of God to protect Israel (Ezekiel 38:17–39:29)

C. Reinstatement of True Worship in Israel (Ezekiel 40:1–46:24)

1. New temple (Ezekiel 40:1–43:12)
2. New worship (Ezekiel 43:13–46:24)

D. Redistribution of the Land in Israel (Ezekiel 47:1–48:35)

1. Position of the river (Ezekiel 47:1–12)
2. Portions for the tribes (Ezekiel 47:13–48:35)

Ezekiel 17:1 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

NET The word of the LORD came to me:

NLT Then this message came to me from the LORD:

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying - This opening signals that what follows is not Ezekiel's own reflection, but direct divine revelation given to the prophet Ezekiel while he was among the exiles in Babylon. Before God explains events, He establishes authority—this is His Word, not man's opinion.

Ezekiel 17:2 "Son of man, propound a riddle and speak a parable to the house of Israel,

NET "Son of man, offer a riddle, and tell a parable to the house of Israel.

NLT "Son of man, give this riddle, and tell this story to the people of Israel.

- Eze 20:49 Jdg 9:8-15 14:12-19 2Sa 12:1-4 Ho 12:10 Mt 13:13,14,35 Mk 4:33,34 1Co 13:12

Related Passages:

Psalms 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,

Matthew 13:13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Son of man **Son of man** is God's way of addressing Ezekiel, emphasizing his humanity and role as God's messenger to His people. The address "Son of man" (Hebrew *ben-'adam*) also emphasizes Ezekiel's humanity and lowliness in contrast to the divine Speaker, reminding us that the messenger is merely an instrument (cf. Ezek 2:1).

This verse introduces one of the most symbolic and penetrating messages in the book of Book of Ezekiel. God commands Ezekiel to deliver His truth not in plain speech, but in the form of a riddle and a parable—a method that both reveals and conceals.

propound a riddle - A riddle (Hebrew *hîdâ*) refers to something enigmatic, indirect, and requiring discernment—not a puzzle for

entertainment, but a truth veiled in symbolism that demands spiritual perception (cf. Jdg 14:12).

and speak a parable - The parallel command “speak a parable” (Hebrew *māšāl*) broadens the idea to include a proverbial or illustrative story, often drawn from everyday imagery but conveying deeper theological meaning.

Together, these terms indicate that what follows (Ezek 17:3–10) is a symbolic allegory—the famous account of the great eagle, the cedar, and the vine—which represents real historical events involving Babylon, Judah, and Egypt (cf. Ezek 17:12–15). God deliberately chooses this indirect method because the “house of Israel” had become spiritually dull and resistant to straightforward rebuke. Like Jesus later, who spoke in parables (cf. Mt 13:10–13), this form both tests the hearer and exposes the heart: those who are receptive will seek understanding, while the hardened will remain in confusion.

to the house of Israel - this message is addressed to the covenant people as a whole, including those already in exile. The use of a riddle or parable indicates that the message will not be straightforward but symbolic, requiring spiritual discernment to understand its meaning.

When plain words are ignored, God may speak in riddles—forcing the hearer to either seek truth or reveal a hardened heart.

Ryrie - A **riddle** contained an obscure idea requiring interpretation; a **parable** was an illustration by comparison. The first eagle in this parable seems to represent Nebuchadnezzar (Eze17:3,12); the second is Pharaoh (Eze17:7,15). The vine is Judah and King Zedekiah (Eze17:6,14), vacillating between Babylon and Egypt, although God had told him to yield to Nebuchadnezzar.

parable. The first eagle in this parable seems to represent Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 17:3,12); the second is Pharaoh (Ezekiel 17:7,15). The vine is Judah and King Zedekiah (Ezekiel 17:6,14), vacillating between Babylon and Egypt, although God had told him to yield to Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezekiel 17:3 saying, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “A great eagle with great wings, long pinions and a full plumage of many colors came to Lebanon and took away the top of the cedar.

- **A great eagle with** Nebuchadnezzar, so called from his towering ambition and rapaciousness. Eze 17:7,12-21 De 28:49 Jer 4:13 48:40 49:16 La 4:19 Ho 8:1 Mt 24:28
- **great wings**: Extensive empire, both in length and breadth. Da 2:38 4:22 7:4
- **came**: Came against Judah and Jerusalem. Eze 17:12 2Ki 24:10-16 2Ch 36:9,10 Jer 22:23-28 24:1
- **the top**: Jeconiah, whom he took captive to Babylon.
- the cedar: The royal and ancient family of David.

Related Passages:

2 Kings 24:12 Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign.

Jeremiah 22:24-25 “As I live,” declares the LORD, “even though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off; 25and I will give you over into the hand of those who are seeking your life, yes, into the hand of those whom you dread, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

THE PARABLE OF A GREAT EAGLE

saying, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “A great eagle with great wings, long pinions and a full plumage of many colors- This verse begins the parable proper, and every element is symbolic of real historical events. The “great eagle” represents Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, whose power, speed, and dominance are vividly portrayed by the eagle imagery—“great wings” and “long pinions” emphasizing his far-reaching military strength and ability to conquer distant nations (cf. Jer 48:40; Dan 7:4). The phrase “full plumage of many colors” suggests the vast diversity and splendor of his empire, composed of many peoples and nations under Babylon’s rule.

came to Lebanon and took away the top of the cedar- **Lebanon** symbolizes Jerusalem and the royal house of Judah, since

Lebanon was famous for its majestic cedars and often used figuratively for royal glory and strength (cf. 2Ki 14:9; Isa 2:13). The “cedar” specifically represents the Davidic dynasty, the royal line of kings descended from David. When the eagle “took away the top of the cedar,” it refers to the deportation of the young king Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah) in 597 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar removed him from the throne and carried him into exile in Babylon (cf. 2Ki 24:12–15). The “top” or highest shoot signifies the king and the elite leadership—the very best and most prominent of Judah being taken away.

Notice that what appears politically as Babylon’s conquest is, in reality, God’s sovereign action—He is the One speaking: “Thus says the Lord GOD...”

Ezekiel 17:4 “He plucked off the topmost of its young twigs and brought it to a land of merchants; he set it in a city of traders.

- the top: The princes of Judah.
- into: Isa 43:14 47:15 Jer 51:13 Rev 18:3,11-19
- a land: Chaldea
- a city: Babylon, which by means of the Euphrates and Tigris, had communications with the richest and most distant nations.

He plucked off the topmost of its young twigs and brought it to a land of merchants; he set it in a city of traders

Ezekiel 17:5 “He also took some of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil. He placed it beside abundant waters; he set it like a willow.

- the seed: Zedekiah, brother to Jeconiah. Eze 17:13 2Ki 24:17 Jer 37:1
- planted it in a fruitful field: Heb. put it in a field of seed, Made him king of Judea. De 8:7-9
- he placed: Made him dependent on Babylon, the city of great waters, as the willow is on humidity. Eze 19:11,12 Isa 15:7 44:4

He also took some of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil. He placed it beside abundant waters; he set it like a willow.

Ezekiel 17:6 “Then it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine with its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and yielded shoots and sent out branches.

- it grew: Eze 17:14 Pr 16:18,19
- whose: The Jewish state had then no height of dominion; and Zedekiah was wholly dependent on Nebuchadnezzar.

Then it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine with its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and yielded shoots and sent out branches

Ezekiel 17:7 “But there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage; and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him and sent out its branches toward him from the beds where it was planted, that he might water it.

- another: Pharaoh-hophra, or Apries, king of Egypt. Eze 17:15 2Ki 24:20 2Ch 26:13 Jer 37:5-7
- did bend: Looked to him for support, in his intended rebellion.

But there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage; and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him and sent out its branches toward him from the beds where it was planted, that he might water it

The second “great eagle” is Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt, to whom Zedekiah of Israel appealed for help against Babylon (cf. Jer. 44:30). Zedekiah broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar by his appeal to Egypt (v. 18). The results were disastrous for Israel (vv. 20, 21).

Ezekiel 17:8 “It was planted in good soil beside abundant waters, that it might yield branches and bear fruit and become a splendid vine.”

- soil: Heb. field, Eze 17:5,6
- and that: Though he was dependent on Babylon, yet he was in such a situation as would have enabled him to reign in credit, and be useful to his people.

It was planted in good soil beside abundant waters, that it might yield branches and bear fruit and become a splendid vine.”

Ezekiel 17:9 “Say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit, so that it withers—so that all its sprouting leaves wither? And neither by great strength nor by many people can it be raised from its roots again.

- Shall it: Shall he succeed in casting off the yoke of the king of Babylon, to whom he had sworn fealty? Eze 17:10,15-17 Nu 14:41 2Ch 13:12 20:20 Isa 8:9,10 30:1-7 31:1-3 Jer 32:5
- shall he: He shall come and dethrone him, and carry him captive. 2Ki 25:4-7 Jer 21:4-7 24:8-10 29:4-7 52:7-11
- the fruit: The children of Zedekiah.
- even: Jer 37:10

Say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit, so that it withers—so that all its sprouting leaves wither? And neither by great strength nor by many people can it be raised from its roots again

Ezekiel 17:10 “Behold, though it is planted, will it thrive? Will it not completely wither as soon as the east wind strikes it—wither on the beds where it grew?””

- shall it: Eze 19:12-14 Ho 12:1 13:15 Mt 21:19 Mk 11:20 Joh 15:6 Jude 1:12

Behold, though it is planted, will it thrive? Will it not completely wither as soon as the east wind strikes it—wither on the beds where it grew

Ezekiel 17:11 Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

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

Ryrie - V11-21 These verses provide an explanation of the features of the parable. (1) The king of Babylon took King Jehoiachin from Judah to Babylon in 597 B.C. (v12 cf. v3-4 2Ki24:8-16 25:27-30). (2) Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah a puppet king in Judah (v13; cf. v5-6; 2Ki24:17). (3) Egypt attracted Zedekiah (v7). (4) Zedekiah broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar and thus with God (v15-19). (5) Zedekiah would die in Babylon and his troops would be defeated (v20-21).

Ezekiel 17:12 “Say now to the rebellious house, ‘Do you not know what these things mean?’ Say, ‘Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took its king and princes and brought them to him in Babylon.

- to the: Eze 2:5,8 3:9 12:9 Isa 1:2
- Know: Eze 24:19 Ex 12:26 De 6:20 Jos 4:6,21 Mt 13:51 15:16,17 16:11 Mk 4:13 Lu 9:45 Ac 8:30
- Behold: Eze 17:3 1:2 2Ki 24:10-16 2Ch 36:9,10 Jer 22:24-28
- and led: Isa 39:7 Jer 52:31-34

Say now to the rebellious house, ‘Do you not know what these things mean?’ Say, ‘Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took its king and princes and brought them to him in Babylon

Ezekiel 17:13 'He took one of the royal family and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He also took away the mighty of the land,

- hath taken: Eze 17:5 2Ki 24:17 Jer 37:1
- taken an oath of him: Heb. brought him to an oath, 2Ch 36:13 Jer 5:2
- he hath also: 2Ki 24:15,16 Jer 24:1 29:2

He took one of the royal family and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He also took away the mighty of the land,

Ezekiel 17:14 that the kingdom might be in subjection, not exalting itself, but keeping his covenant that it might continue.

the kingdom: Eze 17:6 29:14 De 28:43 1Sa 2:7,30 Ne 9:36,37 La 5:10 Mt 22:17-21

base: Or, low; a tributary kingdom, dependent on the king of Babylon.

but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand: Heb. to keep his covenant, to stand to it, Jer 27:12-17 38:17

that the kingdom might be in subjection, not exalting itself, but keeping his covenant that it might continue.

Ezekiel 17:15 'But he rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt that they might give him horses and many troops. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Can he indeed break the covenant and escape?

- he rebelled: Eze 17:7 2Ki 24:20 2Ch 36:13 Jer 52:3
- in: De 17:16 Isa 30:1-4 31:1-3 36:6-9 Jer 37:5-7
- Shall he prosper: Eze 17:9 De 29:12-15 Jer 22:29,30
- shall he escape: Eze 17:18 21:25 Pr 19:5 Jer 32:4 34:3 38:18,23 Mt 23:33 Heb 2:3
- or shall: Ps 55:23

But he rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt that they might give him horses and many troops. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Can he indeed break the covenant and escape

Ezekiel 17:16 'As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'Surely in the country of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke, in Babylon he shall die.

- whose oath: Eze 17:18,19 16:59 Ex 20:7 Nu 30:2 Jos 9:20 2Sa 21:2 Ps 15:4 Ex 8:2 Ho 10:4 Zec 5:3,4 Mal 3:5 Ro 1:31 1Ti 1:10 2Ti 3:3
- even: Eze 17:10 12:13 Jer 32:4,5 34:3-5 39:7 52:11

As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'Surely in the country of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke, in Babylon he shall die

Ezekiel 17:17 'Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in the war, when they cast up ramps and build siege walls to cut off many lives.

- shall: Eze 29:6,7 Isa 36:6 Jer 37:7 La 4:17
- by: Eze 4:2 Jer 33:5 52:4

Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in the war, when they cast up ramps and build siege walls to cut off many lives

Ezekiel 17:18 ‘Now he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, and behold, he pledged his allegiance, yet did all these things; he shall not escape.’”

- Seeing: Though Zedekiah's oath had been given to a heathen, a conqueror, and a tyrant, yet God considered the violation of it a most aggravated sin against Him, and determined to punish him for it.
- he: 1Ch 29:24 2Ch 30:8 *margins La 5:6
- he shall: Eze 17:15

Now he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, and behold, he pledged his allegiance, yet did all these things; he shall not escape

Ezekiel 17:19 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “As I live, surely My oath which he despised and My covenant which he broke, I will inflict on his head.

- surely: Eze 21:23-27 De 5:11 Jer 5:2,9 7:9-15

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “As I live, surely My oath which he despised and My covenant which he broke, I will inflict on his head.

Ezekiel 17:20 “I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. Then I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there regarding the unfaithful act which he has committed against Me.

- I will spread: Eze 12:13 32:3 Jos 10:16-18 2Sa 18:9 2Ch 33:11 Job 10:16 Ec 9:12 Jer 39:5-7 La 1:13 4:20 Ho 7:12 Lu 21:35
- plead: Eze 20:35,36 38:22 Jer 2:9,35 50:44 Ho 2:2 Mic 6:2

I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. Then I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there regarding the unfaithful act which he has committed against Me.

Ezekiel 17:21 “All the choice men in all his troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to every wind; and you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken.”

- all his fugitives: Eze 5:12 12:14 2Ki 25:5,11 Jer 48:44 52:8 Am 9:1,9,10
- shall know: Eze 6:7,10 13:14,23 15:7 Isa 26:11

All the choice men in all his troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to every wind; and you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken.

Ezekiel 17:22 Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.

- highest: Eze 34:29 Ps 80:15 Isa 4:2 11:1-5 Jer 23:5,6 33:15,16 Zec 3:8 Zec 4:12-14 6:12,13
- a tender: Isa 53:2
- upon: Eze 20:40 40:2 Ps 2:6 72:16 Isa 2:2,3 Da 2:35,44,45 Mic 4:1

Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain

HM - This prophecy looks to the distant future and Messiah. The "branch" is a frequent representation of the coming Savior/King (Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8).

a tender one (a sprig). I.e., Messiah (cf. Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

BSB - 22-24) God promised to plant a "cedar" where it will grow and prosper. The "tender" young twig refers to the Messiah, a member of the Davidic line. References to the Messiah as a "tender plant" and righteous "Branch" are common among the prophets (cf. Isa. 11:1-5; 53:2; Jer. 23:5-8; Zech. 3:8-10; 6:12, 13).

Ezekiel 17:23 On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches.

- and it: Ps 92:12,13 Isa 27:6 Joh 12:24 15:5-8
- under: Eze 31:6 Ge 49:10 Ps 22:27-30 72:8-11 Isa 2:2 11:6-10 49:18 Isa 60:4-12 Da 4:10-14,21-23 Ho 14:7 Mt 13:32,47,48 Lu 14:21-23 Ac 10:11,12 Ga 3:28 Col 3:11 Rev 11:15

On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches.

Ezekiel 17:24 "All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform it."

- all the trees: Ps 96:11,12 Isa 55:12,13
- have brought: 1Sa 2:7,8 Job 5:11 40:12 Ps 75:6,7 89:38,45 Isa 2:13,14 9:6,7 Isa 11:1-9 26:5 Am 9:11 Lu 1:33,52,53 1Co 1:27,28
- I the Lord have spoken: Eze 12:25 22:14 24:14 Mt 24:35 Lu 21:33

All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform it