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## Ezekiel 4.

(2014)

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## Ezekiel 4.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

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### Topics.

- Ezekiel is told to engrave Jerusalem on a brick.
- Ezekiel is told to lie on his left side 390 days.
- Ezekiel is told to lie on his right side 40 days.
- The LORD tells Ezekiel to cook food on human dung.
- The LORD tells Ezekiel he can cook his food on cows' dung.

**Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel:** Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the "likeness" of the LORD". Ezekiel was keenly aware of God's presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God's covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (chapter 37) is a classic picture of God's ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

**NOTE:** Ezekiel's message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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**History of Ezekiel:** Ezekiel, with the men of Judah who had influence was taken to Babylon ten years before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem. Ezekiel had been in captivity for five years when the LORD called him to be a prophet (Ezekiel 1:2) then five years later Jerusalem was destroyed. This chapter is in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Ezekiel's captivity, five years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

### Ezekiel is told to Engrave Jerusalem on a Brick.

Ezekiel 4:1-3 ----- <sup>1</sup>"And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a mound against it. Set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. <sup>3</sup>And you, take an iron griddle, and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel.

**Siegeworks:** in this context refers to a hostile camp of warriors hemming in a fortress (in this instance Jerusalem).

**The LORD uses Ezekiel's life as a sign:** throughout the book of Ezekiel the LORD often uses dramatic actions in Ezekiel's life as signs to: -

- Get the attention of Israel.
- Depict the condition of the entire nation of Israel.
- Picture future events that are about to come upon Israel.

**This symbol of the brick** is a picture of the hardness of the people's heart that remained at Jerusalem against the LORD'S word and their rebellion. The siegeworks surrounding the brick are a picture of the armies of Babylon who are about to attack Jerusalem and bring the city to ruin and plunder the temple. The LORD is giving Ezekiel a picture of future events that are about to come upon Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem is likened to a brick:** because the people within the walls of the city have set their hearts diamond hard against the word of the LORD. The LORD'S prophet Jeremiah is actually in Jerusalem at this time speaking the LORD'S word to the people but they refuse to listen and even worse throw him in a deep hole of mud and leave him to die (but God had other plans for his faithful servant Jeremiah).

**Put siegeworks against the brick:** refers to Babylon's armies after destroying the land of Judah surrounded the walls of Jerusalem (the brick) for nearly two years so no-one could go in or out to get food, the famine became so bad within the city walls that parents were eating their new-born babies for food to survive. Eventually Babylon entered the city and took its inhabitants captive.

#### **Ezekiel is told to lie on His Left Side 390 Days.**

Ezekiel 4:4-5 ----- 4<sup>th</sup> Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. 5<sup>th</sup> For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel.

**Lie on your left side for 390 days:** (over 1 year) this does not need to mean that Ezekiel lay on his side 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for over a year. He probably went out during the busy time of the day and lay for awhile each day. People would be flocking in daily, out of curiosity, at the time appointed, to see Ezekiel and to make their different remarks and comments concerning the foolish thing (at least to them) he seemed to be doing. It only had to be enough to create conversation amongst the townsfolk and get people asking what this prophet is doing laying on his side everyday. Remember they did not have TV, internet mobile phones etc. God had to do extreme and strange things that jolted the human mind to arouse people's curiosity and get them talking about what Ezekiel was doing so that when he did speak they would be eager to listen.

**390 days:** Ezekiel is among the captives in Babylon and is told by God to lie on his left side for a number of days equal to the years of Israel's idolatry. Everything that Ezekiel does was to represent the siege of Jerusalem by signs and to show that sin is the provoking cause of the impending ruin of Jerusalem.

**Timeframe of the 390 days:** Ezekiel was to lie on his left side 390 days (about 23 months) the siege of Jerusalem is computed to have lasted 18 months (Jer. 52:4-6), but if the 5 months interval, when Babylon withdrew because of the approach of Egypt's army (Jer. 37:5-8) is deducted from the 23 months then the number of the days of the close siege would be 390. But the 390 days also had another signification the 390 days signified 390 years symbolizing Israel's guilt for 390 years. The following are the various thoughts regarding the 390 years: -

- The 390 years began at Solomon's fall to idolatry in the 27<sup>th</sup> year of his reign and ended in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah king of Judah captivity.
- The 390 years began from Israel's first apostasy in the year Jeroboam set up the golden calves (1Kings 12:20-33) (975 B.C.) to the destruction of Jerusalem, which completed the ruin of the small remnant who had survived Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon's first invasion of Jerusalem (about 583 B.C.).

Whatever the 390 years refers to the main point is that the period of time was to drive home to Israel their constant rebellion and gross sin over many years toward God and to bring them to repentance.

### **Ezekiel is told to lie on His Right Side 40 Days.**

Ezekiel 4:6-8 ----- <sup>6</sup>And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year. <sup>7</sup>And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city. <sup>8</sup>And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.

When Ezekiel has finished lying on his left side for 390 days he is then to lie on his right side for 40 days to bear the iniquity of Judah (the kingdom of the two tribes). The following are the various thoughts regarding the 40 years: -

- 40 years from Manasseh's 55 year reign in which he had not repented, and which, we are expressly told, was the cause of God's removal of Judah, but with the period of Josiah's reformation deducted from the 55 years (1Kings 21:10-16) (2 Kings 23:26, 27).
- 40 years from Josiah's renewing the covenant, until the destruction of the temple, during which time God deferred to punish Judah, to see if they kept the covenant, or retained their idolatries, sadly they retained their idols for 13 years of Josiah's reign; for 11 years of Jehoiakim's; for 11 years of Zedekiah's reign, and 5 years of Zedekiah's captivity, totalling 40 years, but all this was done in a vision.
- 40 years prior to Judah's captivity from 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah king of Judah, when Jeremiah began to prophesy (Jer. 1:1, 2).
- 40 years prior to Judah's captivity, from the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah when the book of the law was found and the people renewed their covenant with God.

Whatever the 40 years embraces the main point is that the period of time was to drive home to Israel their constant rebellion and gross sin over many years toward God and to bring them to repentance.

**NOTICE:** God's dealings in the past are a key to the future. This is because God moves on the same everlasting principles which are permanent and eternal.

**Ezekiel's bare arm:** when Ezekiel went out to lie down he was to have people tie him up and with one arm bare prophesy against the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel's bare arm would have been a symbol of Israel's nakedness before God meaning their wickedness is uncovered.

**Being tied up:** was a symbol, of Jerusalem being bound up by the armies of Babylon surrounding the city walls.

### **The LORD tells Ezekiel to Cook Food on Human Dung.**

Ezekiel 4:9-13 ----- <sup>9</sup>"And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer, and put them into a single vessel and make your bread from them. During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it. <sup>10</sup>And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from day to day you shall eat it. <sup>11</sup>And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin; from day to day you shall drink. <sup>12</sup>And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung." <sup>13</sup>And the LORD said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them."

The LORD told Ezekiel to cook his food on human dung in the sight of all the people of Israel. Using human dung to cook food on was to the Jews an unclean thing. The LORD is using this as a symbol of the people of Israel eating their food amongst foreign nations (the Jews viewed themselves as the holy race with God and anyone who was not of their race as an unclean people without God).

Cooking food on human dung was predicting the remaining Jews at Jerusalem being taken into captivity into Babylon and dwelling amongst foreign nations who they considered to be and unclean people.

**Weighing and measuring out the food:** was a symbol of the great famine that is about to come upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem because they cannot go out or come in to get food because of the armies of Babylon have surrounded the city. The famine got so bad some parents were eating their new born babies to survive. Everything Ezekiel was told to do was to be a sign to Israel.

**NOTE:** cooking on cows dung is a common practice in India even today, they allow the dung to dry out and then use it to cook on. In places where the cow is not protected and there is a lack of firewood, dried out human dung was most likely used as fuel for a fire.

#### **The LORD tells Ezekiel He can Cook his Food on Cows Dung.**

Ezekiel 4:14-17 ----- <sup>14</sup>Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never defiled myself. From my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat come into my mouth." <sup>15</sup>Then he said to me, "See, I assign to you cow's dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread." <sup>16</sup>Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, behold, I will break the supply of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. <sup>17</sup>I will do this that they may lack bread and water, and look at one another in dismay, and rot away because of their punishment.

Under the Old Testament law there were very specific laws regarding what foods Israel could and could not eat. Ezekiel tells the LORD that he has always been faithful to the laws regarding clean and unclean foods and that he does not want to defile himself now by cooking on human dung. The LORD tells him that it is OK for him to cook his own food on cows dung instead of human dung.

The supply of food into Jerusalem will be broken refers back to verses ten and eleven. Food in Jerusalem will be so scarce everyone will be in anxiety when they eat and drink because they will know that it maybe the last time they do eat and drink.

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End.