

Ezekiel's Sign

Key Verse: *“Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.”*
—*Ezekiel 24:24, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 24:15-27

feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man's bread of sorrow. So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.”—Ezek. 24:16-18, *NKJV*

What may have enabled Ezekiel to bear this onerous command? We reason that his lifelong devotion to God, marked by obedience and service, had developed deep-seated faith; faith such as Job expressed, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”—Job 13:15, *NKJV*

We recognize that divine wisdom was operating as God transformed Ezekiel's personal tragedy into Israel's national lesson. How were these two events related? They shared one thing, identified as “the desire of your eyes.” For Ezekiel, that was his wife. For Israel, it was Solomon's Temple, the symbol of their national polity.

Ezekiel's sign is achingly profound. His wife, described by the Lord as “the desire of your eyes,” was going to die suddenly —“with one stroke.” Compounding the feelings of loss and sorrow, the Lord commanded that Ezekiel must not express his grief publicly. “You shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your

The Israelites were apparently curious at the behavior of the prophet. It was odd that he did not mourn his wife, and they knew that Ezekiel's actions often had divine intent and meaning. They enquired about it. The people said to him, "Will you not tell us what these things signify to us, that you behave so?"—Ezek. 24:19, *NKJV*

Ezekiel answered them, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, Speak to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips nor eat man's bread of sorrow. Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another."—vss. 20-23, *NKJV*

The Temple would be destroyed, national polity dissolved, and the people of Israel taken captive or killed. Thus Ezekiel was "a sign," as noted in our Key Verse. The calamity happened, and no amount of grieving would avert it. Israel was taken captive to Babylon. The collective conscience of the people of Israel was afflicted with sorrow, yielding the beautiful poem found in Psalm 137. "By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion! How shall we sing the LORD's song In a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy." (Ps. 137:1-6, *NKJV*) Poignancy springs from Ezekiel's sign. ■