

## Ezekiel Acts Out The Jerusalem Siege

### Ezekiel 4

Group <sup>1</sup>	C	V	Description
Siege of Jerusalem Predicted	4	1-3	Ezekiel told to build a model of Jerusalem
		4-8	Ezekiel told to act out the siege (Days = years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 390 days laying on his left side facing north for Israel</li> <li>• 40 days laying on his right side facing south for Judah</li> </ul>
Defiled Bread		9-17	Ezekiel food during the display - bread & water - as a sign

### Reflections

This chapter needs to read in connection with the next as they are tied together. Here Ezekiel is told to act out the siege of Jerusalem for a set number of days and to eat only a bread made of a specific recipe. This is not the first time that a prophet is told to act out a prophecy or uses some kind of visual representation of a prophecy. (See the examples below.)

How to account for the 430 days, and their corresponding years, is difficult to determine. Theories abound as to when to begin counting the days/years and what they represent. Henry's & Clarke's (see the notes below) accounting of the days seem to make the most sense. Payne indicates a similar rendering as well.<sup>2</sup>

Ezekiel's diet of bread and water, and the things he is to do with his hair in the next chapter, indicate the severity of the siege which the Lord is bringing on Jerusalem and the Lord's resolve in seeing it come to pass. This is a result of their no longer listening to God's word. We would do well to learn this lesson too.

### Examples of visual representations in prophecy

#### *Samuel & Saul—torn hem of a robe*

**1 Samuel 15:27-29 NASB** As Samuel turned to go, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. **28** So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you. **29** "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

#### *Ahijah & Jeroboam of Israel—pieces of a new cloak*

**1 Kings 11:28-31 NASB** Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph. **29** It came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. **30** Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces. **31** He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes

#### *Elisha & Jeroboam of Judah—shooting an arrow out a window and striking a tree with the arrow*

**2 Kings 13:14-19 NASB** When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash

1 (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

2 (Payne 353) on Ezekiel 4:4-6.

## Ezekiel Acts Out The Jerusalem Siege

the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" 15 Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." And he put his hand *on it*, then Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. 17 He said, "Open the window toward the east," and he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, "Shoot!" And he shot. And he said, "The LORD'S arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed *them*." 18 Then he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground," and he struck *it* three times and stopped. 19 So the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed *it*. But now you shall strike Aram *only* three times."

*Isaiah—told to walk around naked*

**Isaiah 20:2-4 NASB** at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips and take your shoes off your feet." And he did so, going naked and barefoot. 3 And the LORD said, "Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush, 4 so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

*Jeremiah—a rotted waistband*

**Jeremiah 13:1-14 NASB** Thus the LORD said to me, "Go and buy yourself a linen waistband and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water." 2 So I bought the waistband in accordance with the word of the LORD and put it around my waist. 3 Then the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, 4 "Take the waistband that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a crevice of the rock." 5 So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD had commanded me. 6 After many days the LORD said to me, "Arise, go to the Euphrates and take from there the waistband which I commanded you to hide there." 7 Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the waistband from the place where I had hidden it; and lo, the waistband was ruined, it was totally worthless. 8 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 9 "Thus says the LORD, 'Just so will I destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10 'This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, let them be just like this waistband which is totally worthless. 11 'For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,' declares the LORD, 'that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.' 12 "Therefore you are to speak this word to them, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Every jug is to be filled with wine.'" And when they say to you, 'Do we not very well know that every jug is to be filled with wine?' 13 then say to them, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land - the kings that sit for David on his throne, the priests, the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem--with drunkenness! 14 "I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together," declares the LORD. "I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion so as not to destroy them.'""

*Jeremiah—earthenware jar to be broken*

**Jeremiah 19:1-13 NASB** Thus says the LORD, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and *take* some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests. 2 "Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you, 3 and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of

## Ezekiel Acts Out The Jerusalem Siege

Jerusalem: thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle. 4 "Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had *ever* known, and *because* they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent 5 and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it *ever* enter My mind; 6 therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter. 7 "I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. 8 "I will also make this city a desolation and an *object of* hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters. 9 "I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them." 10 "Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you 11 and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no *other* place for burial. 12 "This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants," declares the LORD, "so as to make this city like Topheth. 13 "The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out drink offerings to other gods.'"

### *Jeremiah—bonds and yokes*

**Jeremiah 27:1-11 NASB** In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying-- 2 thus says the LORD to me--"Make for yourself bonds and yokes and put them on your neck, 3 and send word to the king of Edom, to the king of Moab, to the king of the sons of Ammon, to the king of Tyre and to the king of Sidon by the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. 4 "Command them *to go* to their masters, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, thus you shall say to your masters, 5 "I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight. 6 "Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. 7 "All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant. 8 "It will be, *that* the nation or the kingdom which will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine and with pestilence," declares the LORD, "until I have destroyed it by his hand. 9 "But as for you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers or your sorcerers who speak to you, saying, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon.' 10 "For they prophesy a lie to you in order to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out and you will perish. 11 "But the nation which will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let remain on its land," declares the LORD, "and they will till it and dwell in it.'"

### *Agabus & Paul—used Paul's belt*

**Acts 21:10-11 NASB** As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands,

## Ezekiel Acts Out The Jerusalem Siege

and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

---

### Notes from Henry and Clarke

---

(Clarke) on Ezekiel 4:4-8. - " ... The siege commenced the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah; and it was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of the same king. Thus the siege had lasted, in the whole, eighteen months, or five hundred and ten days. Subtract for the time that Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to interrupt the siege, in order to go against the Egyptians, four months and twenty days, or one hundred and forty days, and there will remain four hundred and thirty days, composed of 390+40=430."

On Ezekiel 4:16. - " ... Abp. Newcome on [2Ki 25:6](#) observes: "This number of years will take us back, with sufficient exactness, from the year in which Jerusalem was sacked by Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of Jeroboam's reign, when national idolatry began in Israel. The period of days seems to predict the duration of the siege by the Babylonians, [2Ki 25:9](#), deducting from the year five months and twenty-nine days, mentioned [2Ki 25:1-4](#), the time during which the Chaldeans were on their expedition against the Egyptians; see [Jer 37:6](#)." This amounts nearly to the same as that mentioned above."

(Henry) III. He was ordered to lie upon his side before it, as it were to surround it, representing the Chaldean army lying before it to block it up, to keep the meat from going in and the mouths from going out. He was to lie on his left side 390 *days* ([Eze 4:5](#)), about thirteen months; the siege of Jerusalem is computed to last eighteen months ([Jer 52:4-6](#)), but if we deduct from that five months' interval, when the besiegers withdrew upon the approach of Pharaoh's army ([Jer 37:5-8](#)), the number of the days of the close siege will be 390. Yet that also had another signification. The 390 days, according to the prophetic dialect, signified 390 years; and, when the prophet lies so many days on his side, he bears the guilt of that iniquity which *the house of Israel*, the ten tribes, had borne 390 years, reckoning from their first apostasy under Jeroboam to the destruction of Jerusalem, which completed the ruin of those small remains of them that had incorporated with Judah. He is then to lie forty days *upon his right side*, and so long to bear *the iniquity of the house of Judah*, the kingdom of the two tribes, because the measure-filling sins of that people were those which they were guilty of during the last forty years before their captivity, since the thirteenth year of Josiah, when Jeremiah began to prophesy ([Jer 1:1](#), [Jer 1:2](#)), or, as some reckon it, since the eighteenth, when the book of the law was found and the people renewed their covenant with God. When they persisted in their impieties and idolatries, notwithstanding they had such a prophet and such a prince, and were brought into the bond of such a covenant, what could be expected but ruin without remedy? Judah, that had such helps and advantages for reformation, fills the measure of its iniquity in less time than Israel does. Now we are not to think that the prophet lay constantly night and day upon his side, but every day, for so many days together, at a certain time of the day, when he received visits, and company came in, he was found lying 390 *days on his left side* and *forty days on his right side* before his portraiture of Jerusalem, which all that saw might easily understand to mean the close besieging of that city, and people would be flocking in daily, some for curiosity and some for conscience, at the hour appointed, to see it and to take their different remarks upon it. His being found constantly on the same side, as if *bands were laid upon him* (as indeed they were by the divine command), so that he could not *turn himself from one side to another till he had ended the days of the siege*, did plainly represent the close and constant continuance of the besiegers about the city during that number of days, till they had gained their point.

---

Key Words: Old Testament, Prophecy, Ezekiel, Jerusalem, Siege, Bread, Water

---

## Ezekiel Acts Out The Jerusalem Siege



This work by James Swanson is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) International License. Originally published at [studythebook.org](http://studythebook.org) on June 3, 2016.

---

### *Bibliography*

---

Clarke, Adam. *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Holy Bible*. e-Sword, 1800s. Print.

Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Public Domain; e-Sword, 1700s. Print.

(NASB) *New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995. Print.

Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973. Print.