

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious Part XVIII: A Parable About God's Sovereign All-Sufficiency (Ezekiel 17:1-24)

I. Introduction

- A. The sin of departing from God for idols occurs when one fails to view God as sufficient to meet his needs.
- B. This was the problem of the Hebrew people in Ezekiel's era, so God led His prophet Ezekiel to give a parable as a literary device meant to highlight a particular lesson, the lesson that God is an All-Sufficient Lord.
- C. We thus view that parable in Ezekiel 17:1-24 for our insight, instruction and edification (as follows):

II. A Parable About God's Sovereign All-Sufficiency, Ezekiel 17:1-24.

- A. God directed Ezekiel to tell the people of Israel who were captive in Babylon a figurative saying, a parable about two eagles, that required an explanation, Ezekiel 17:1-2; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1258-1259.
- B. In the Biblical text, the parable is given first in Ezekiel 17:3-10 and its explanation later in Ezekiel 17:11-21, but for clarity, we present the parable along with its explanation as the parable's plot is unfolded (as follows):
 - 1. A great eagle, representing Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar under God's oversight, came to Lebanon, representing Jerusalem, and he took its highest branch of a cedar, representing Judah's king Jehoiachin and his officials, and brought them to a city of merchants, representing Babylon, Ezekiel 17:3-4, 11-12.
 - 2. The eagle Nebuchadnezzar then took of the seed of the land, Zedekiah, and planted him as king in Jerusalem, requiring him to be a fruitful but low, subservient vine to Nebuchadnezzar, Ez. 17:5-6, 13-14.
 - 3. However, the vine Zedekiah spread his roots toward another eagle, representing Egypt, looking for Egypt's protection from Babylon in violation of Zedekiah's initial oath to submit to Babylon, Ezekiel 17:7-8, 15a.
 - 4. God rhetorically asked if Zedekiah the vine would prosper, if the first eagle, Babylon would not pluck up Zedekiah's vine so that it would wither and be destroyed, Ezekiel 17:9-10, 15b.
 - 5. Indeed, God warned that the vine Zedekiah would perish and that the army of Egypt's Pharaoh would not save him since in despising his oath to Babylon, Zedekiah had despised his oath to God because God had wanted Zedekiah to submit to Babylon, Ezekiel 17:16-18. (cf. also Jeremiah 38:17-18)
 - 6. God would recompense Zedekiah for his sin by bringing him to Babylon as a prisoner and punish him and his followers for not heeding God's will that he submit to Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar, Ezek. 17:19-21.
- C. Going beyond the initial parable, God **then** presented **Himself** as a figurative **Third** Eagle Who would take of the highest Branch of the high cedar of Lebanon, what represented the Messiah Himself, and plant Him on the mountain heights of Israel in the Messianic Kingdom, Ezekiel 17:22; *Ibid.*, p. 1259-1260.
- D. That Plant would Himself not be made into a subservient vine to Gentiles as occurred in the case of Zedekiah, but He would become a Great Cedar that housed every bird, including every eagle, representing the world's nations like Egypt and Babylon, and all the world would know God had sovereignly controlled these nations, typified as other trees, controlling them as the Sovereign, All-Sufficient Lord, Ezekiel 17:23-24; *Ibid.*, p. 1260.

Lesson: (1) When Israel rejected God in turning to false idols, God punished her to be subservient to Babylon and its king, Nebuchadnezzar. (2) When Judah then rebelled against serving Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar by seeking Egypt's help, God used Babylon to destroy Judah and punishing its king. (3) However, God Himself, the All-Sufficient Provider for His people, will yet establish Messiah's Kingdom over all Gentile lands, and Israel would thus know that the Lord had done this as her All-Sufficient Provider.

Application: (1) The lesson of the history of Israel's monarchy is that God is her Sovereign and All-Sufficient Provider, so we His people today should heed and depend on the Lord as opposed to all other false idol crutches for our provisional blessings. (2) Failure to look to the Lord will bring His sure discipline since He is Sovereign anyway, so we best obey Him. (3) If we find ourselves in a less-than-satisfactory position in life much as Zedekiah was made poetically into a mere low-spreading vine versus being left to grow into a majestic cedar of Lebanon, we best evaluate our hearts to see if God might sovereignly be placing us into a less-than ideal situation to teach us to rely on Him versus some other "idol" for fulfillment. (4) If we DO find that God has INDEED set us in a less-than satisfactory state, we must learn from Zedekiah's futile effort to gain Egypt's help against Babylon NOT to SOLVE our imperfect state by our own methods or means, but repent of leaning on our false "idol" and futile self-help and wait in faith on the Lord to provide His blessing! Otherwise, we risk angering the Lord by our self-help methods and means into having Him discipline us even more severely as occurred with king Zedekiah!