

Ezekiel Part 18 (Ezekiel 17)

1. Ezekiel 17 is not a new message but a new way to reveal the same truths the prophet has been declaring all along.
2. Here Israel is represented by a cedar from Lebanon as well as a vine.
3. This message may have been delivered shortly before the third invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.
4. There are six parts to the prophecy:
 - a. First is an introduction (17:1–4) depicting the great eagle, Nebuchadnezzar, who crops the top of the tree.
 - b. Second, new seed is planted that grows into a vine (17:5–6).
 - c. Third, a second great eagle appears; and the vine extends its roots to him (17:7–8).
 - d. Fourth, the vine is denounced and withers because of its treachery (17:9–10).
 - e. Fifth is the interpretation of the prophetic parable (17:11–21).
 - f. Sixth is a promise that God will restore the vine/tree one day as the messianic kingdom (17:22–24).
5. **17:1–4** The chapter is called a “parable. (**God’s parable and its purpose 17:1-15**)
6. This chapter contains the longest parable in the Old Testament.
7. It presents a prophetic parable about Judah’s treachery during its last days and God’s consequent judgment.
8. The story concerned a great eagle who took the top “shoot” of a cedar and carried it to a land of merchants, already identified as Babylon in 16:29.
9. Cedars were plentiful in Lebanon in ancient times, and it was not uncommon for them to be transported to Mesopotamia, where timber was scarce.
10. The top of the tree, the most prominent part, represented Judah’s king and other leaders, who were taken to Babylon when Ezekiel was exiled in 597 B.C.
11. **17:5–10** In v. 5 the image changes.
12. Judah, no longer a mighty cedar after its fall to Babylon, became a lowly vine in the land of Palestine.
13. Nevertheless, it flourished, being amply cared for and protected as long as it subjected itself to Nebuchadnezzar, the eagle (cf. vv. 13–14).
14. But a second eagle appeared, looking powerful and impressive, and the vine stretched its roots and branches toward him (vv. 7–8).
15. This represented Zedekiah’s rebellious appeal to Egypt for help against Babylon (cf. v. 15).

16. But Ezekiel warned that such rebellion, which apparently had begun at the time of the message, would be disastrous (vv. 9–10; cf. vv. 16–17).
18. Though the soil and water favored growth and productivity, the vine would wither away (vv. 9–10). Even if transplanted, its survival was doubtful.
19. **17:11–21** Verses 11–21 leave little doubt about the meaning of the parable or the identity of its symbols. **(God’s punishment of the puppet king 17:16-21)**
20. The first great eagle was Nebuchadnezzar, and the cedar tree top was Jehoiachin and the “nobles” of Judah.
21. The seed planted in the fertile soil of Canaan was Zedekiah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, who was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar.
22. He made a secret treaty with the Pharaoh of Egypt to overthrow the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. Would the plot succeed?
23. The answer was a resounding no! Ezekiel warned that Zedekiah would be taken captive and die in Babylon.
24. Zedekiah brought further disgrace on God by breaking the oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar that he had taken invoking the divine name, Yahweh, to confirm his pledge (cf. 2 Chr 36:13).
25. After judgment became inevitable, God’s will for Judah was submission to their foreign conquerors as a sign of their submission to him (Jer 38:17–23).
26. As king, Zedekiah had pledged to lead God’s people in obedience to the divine covenant (cf. 16:59).
27. Therefore despising his oath and breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar also amounted to an act of treachery and rebellion against God.
28. Zedekiah was just as unfaithful to Nebuchadnezzar as he had been to God. As a result - God allowed him to be taken captive to Babylon.
29. All Zedekiah’s troops fled and were killed by the invading army of Babylon (vv. 19–21). The accuracy of this description of the destruction of Jerusalem confirmed the truth of this prediction.
30. **17:22–24** The closing verses elaborate on the theme of messianic hope found in 16:60–63. **(God’s promise of a planting 17:22-25)**
31. Whereas the “great eagle” would transplant Israel and their king to the “city of traders” in the “land of merchants” (vv. 3–4), the Sovereign Lord himself (“I myself,” emphatically) promised in v. 22 to provide a new Davidic king and transplant Israel again to a place of protection and prominence on “the mountain heights of Israel.”
32. As Ezekiel 17 closes - Israel’s greatest hope for enduring does not lie in Nebuchadnezzar’s kindness - but in the Lord.
33. Nebuchadnezzar’s plan was only temporary (17:14) - God’s plan was forever (17:23).