

Ezekiel 17:1-24 – The Parable of the Two Eagles and the Tender Shoot

1. A Parable for Israel, Not for Nations Seeking Themselves in Prophecy (Ezekiel 17:1-2)

“And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel.’” (Ezekiel 17:1-2, NKJV)

God begins with a parable involving eagles, but He clearly states this message is to the house of Israel. This prevents the kind of speculation that often arises when people try to force modern nations or events into ancient imagery.

The point is simple: this is about Israel, Babylon, Egypt, and ultimately, God’s sovereign way of lifting up the humble and humbling the proud.

2. The First Great Eagle: Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Ezekiel 17:3-6)

“A great eagle with large wings and long pinions... came to Lebanon and took from the cedar the highest branch.” (Ezekiel 17:3, NKJV)

The first eagle represents Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

The “highest branch” of the cedar refers to King Jehoiachin, taken captive to Babylon.

“He took also of the seed of the land and planted it in a fertile field.” (Ezekiel 17:5, NKJV)

Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, a descendant of David, on the throne of Judah as a vassal king. Zedekiah swore by God to honor this covenant, ruling under Babylon’s authority.

The vine remained low because Zedekiah’s authority was limited. Yet he could have prospered had he remained faithful.

3. The Second Great Eagle: Egypt (Ezekiel 17:7-10)

“But there was another great eagle with large wings and many feathers.” (Ezekiel 17:7, NKJV)

This second eagle represents Egypt.

Instead of honoring his covenant with Babylon, Zedekiah secretly turned to Egypt for military help, hoping Pharaoh would rescue him.

God asks:

“Shall it prosper? Shall he not pull up its roots?” (Ezekiel 17:9, NKJV)

The answer is clear—no.

Zedekiah’s rebellion would not succeed. His kingdom would wither. Egypt would not save him. Babylon would uproot the vine completely.

4. God Interprets the Parable Directly (Ezekiel 17:11-21)

God explains the meaning plainly so that no one can twist the imagery.

“Behold, the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and took its king and princes and led them to Babylon.” (Ezekiel 17:12, NKJV)

He made Zedekiah king and entered into a covenant with him.

But Zedekiah rebelled:

“He rebelled against him by sending his ambassadors to Egypt... Shall he prosper?” (Ezekiel 17:15, NKJV)

He broke his oath—the oath he swore in God’s name.

Therefore, God says:

“As I live... in the place where the king dwells who made him king... there he shall die.” (Ezekiel 17:16, NKJV)

Zedekiah would die in Babylon.

Egypt would not save him.

His army would fall.

His people would scatter.

This is exactly what happened.

5. God’s Final Word: A Tender Branch and a Future King (Ezekiel 17:22-24)

After describing judgment and failure, God gives a surprising promise of hope.

“I will take one of the highest branches of the high cedar and set it out... I will plant it on a high and prominent mountain.” (Ezekiel 17:22, NKJV)

This points forward to Jesus Christ, the true King from David’s line—the tender, humble shoot who would rule with righteousness.

“On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it... under it will dwell birds of every sort.” (Ezekiel 17:23, NKJV)

This new tree—Christ’s kingdom—will grow large and shelter many.

People from every nation will find life and rest under His rule.

God concludes:

“And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree.” (Ezekiel 17:24, NKJV)

God humbles human pride.

God exalts what the world despises.

God establishes His kingdom in His way, through His Son.

Practical Application

1. **God honors integrity, even in difficult circumstances.**
Zedekiah broke his word and suffered the consequences. A believer should let their “yes” be “yes,” even when faithfulness is costly.
2. **Seeking help outside God’s will leads to disappointment.**
Zedekiah ran to Egypt instead of trusting God or honoring his covenant. When we look to worldly solutions or human strength instead of God, we set ourselves up for collapse.
3. **God often works through humble, unexpected beginnings.**
The tender shoot—Jesus—came in humility, not royal splendor. God delights in raising up what seems small, broken, or unnoticed.
4. **Christ’s kingdom provides refuge, purpose, and life.**
Those who come under His lordship find rest, meaning, and spiritual fruitfulness.

A Challenge for Believers

- Are you tempted to rely on human strategies, worldly alliances, or your own strength instead of trusting God?
- Is there a covenant, commitment, or promise you have treated carelessly?
- Are you growing under the reign of Jesus, the true King, or living with divided loyalties?
- Are you letting God humble what needs to be humbled in your life so He can exalt what honors Him?

God calls His people to be faithful, truthful, dependent on Him, and rooted in the true King—Jesus Christ.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Ezekiel 17 ends not with judgment but with a promise—a tender branch planted by God Himself that would grow into a kingdom providing life for all who come to dwell under its branches.

That tender branch is Jesus Christ.

He came humbly, lived righteously, and then shed His blood on the cross to save us from our sins. His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He invites you to come to Him—not as a harsh ruler, but as the King who gives life.

You may come to Him today. You may receive forgiveness, mercy, and new life.

You could pray in words like these:

“Lord Jesus, I believe You died on the cross for my sins and rose again. I confess that You are God, Savior, and Lord. I turn from my sin and place my trust in You. Please forgive me, cleanse me, and bring me into Your kingdom. I want to live under Your shelter and follow You as my King.”

If you turn to Him sincerely, He will receive you.

He will forgive you.

He will make your life flourish under His care, just as He promised.