

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This chapter begins with a new allegory or parable, Ezekiel 17:1-10; to which an explanation is immediately subjoined, Ezekiel 17:11-21. In the remaining verses the prophet, by a beautiful metaphor, makes an easy and natural transition to the Messiah, and predicts the security, increasing prosperity, and ultimate universality of his kingdom, Ezekiel 17:22-24. From the beauty of its images, the elegance of its composition, the perspicuity of its language, the rich variety of its matter, and the easy transition from one part of the subject to another, this chapter forms one of the most beautiful and perfect pieces of its kind that can possibly be conceived in so small a compass; and then the unexpected change from objects that presented nothing to the view but gloom and horror, to a prospect of ineffable glory and beauty, has a most happy effect. Every lowering cloud is dispelled, and the fields again smile in the beams of midday. The traveler, who this moment trembled as he looked around for shelter, now proceeds on his way rejoicing.

Verse 2

Son of man, put forth a riddle - Riddle, Anglo-Saxon, from to divine; a thing that must be curiously investigated and sifted, to find out the meaning; and hence, riddle, a sort of coarse sieve to clean corn, to separate coarse chaff and straws from the pure grain. An instrument formerly used for divination. This is not far removed from the Hebrew $\text{x}\text{---}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\text{“x”}}$ (chidah), from $\text{x}\text{---}\text{x}^{\text{“}}$ (chad), to penetrate; not that which penetrates the mind, but which we must penetrate to find out the sense.

Verse 3

A great eagle - Nebuchadnezzar. See Jeremiah 48:40; Jeremiah 49:22; Daniel 7:4. And see here, Daniel 7:12, where it is so applied.

Great wings - Extensive empire.

Long-winged - Rapid in his conquests.

Full of feathers - Having multitudes of subjects.

Divers colors - People of various nations.

Came unto Lebanon - Came against Judea.

The highest branch - King Jehoiachin he took captive to Babylon.

The cedar - The Jewish state and king.

Verse 4

The top of his young twigs - The princes of Judah.

A land of traffic - Chaldea.

A city of merchants - Babylon; for which this city was the most celebrated of all the cities of the east. Its situation procured it innumerable advantages; its two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, and the Persian Gulf, gave it communication with the richest and the most distant nations.

Verse 5

The seed of the land - Zedekiah, brother of Jehoiachin.

Planted it in a fruitful field - Made him king of Judea in place of his brother.

Placed it by great waters - Put him under the protection of Babylon, situated on the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates.

And set it as a willow tree - Made him dependent on this city of great waters, as the willow is on humidity.

Verse 6

A spreading vine of low stature - The Jewish state having then no height of dominion, it must abide under the

wings or branches of the Chaldean king.

Those branches turned toward him, and the roots - under him - Zedekiah was wholly dependent on Nebuchadnezzar, both for his elevation to the throne, and his support on it.

Verse 7

Another great eagle - Pharaoh-hophra, or Apries, king of Egypt.

With great wings - Extensive dominion.

And many feathers - Numerous subjects.

Did bend her roots - Looked to him for support in her intended rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 8

It was planted in a good soil - Though he depended on Babylon, he lived and reigned as Nebuchadnezzar's vicegerent in the land of Judea.

Verse 9

Shall it prosper? - Shall Zedekiah succeed in casting off the yoke of the king of Babylon, to whom he had sworn fealty?

Shall he not pull up the roots - Nebuchadnezzar will come and dethrone him.

And cut off the fruit - The children of Zedekiah.

The leaves - All the nobles; all shall perish with Zedekiah.

Verse 10

Shall - utterly wither - The regal government shall be no more restored. Zedekiah shall be the last king, and the monarchy shall finally terminate with him.

Verse 12

Know ye not what these things mean? - They are explained in this and the following verses.

Verse 14

That the kingdom might be base - Have no political consequence, and at last sink into a miserable government under Gedaliah.

Verse 15

Sending his ambassadors into Egypt - Zedekiah must have sent his ambassadors into Egypt, between the sixth month of his sixth year, and the fifth month of his seventh year. Compare Ezekiel 8:1, with Ezekiel 20:1. - See Newcome.

Verse 16

In the midst of Babylon he shall die - His eyes were put out; he was carried to Babylon, and never returned.

Verse 18

Seeing he despised the oath - This God particularly resents. He had bound himself by oath, in the presence of Jehovah, to be faithful to the covenant that he made with Nebuchadnezzar, and he took the first opportunity to break it; therefore he shall not escape.

Verse 20

I will spread my net upon him - See the note on Ezekiel 12:13.

Verse 21

All his fugitives - All who attempted to escape with him, and all that ran to Egypt, etc., shall fall by the sword.

Verse 22

I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar - I will raise up another monarchy, which shall come in the line of David, namely, the Messiah; who shall appear as a tender plant, as to his incarnation; but he shall be

high and eminent; his Church, the royal city, the highest and purest ever seen on the face of the earth.

Verse 23

In the mountain of the height of Israel - He shall make his appearance at the temple, and found his Church at Jerusalem.

Shalt bring forth boughs - Apostles, evangelists, and their successors in the Gospel ministry.

And bear fruit - Multitudes of souls shall be converted by their preaching.

And under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing - All the nations of the earth shall receive his Gospel.

In the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell - Trust in him alone for salvation, and be saved in their trusting.

Verse 24

All the trees of the field shall know - All the people of Israel and of Chaldea.

I the Lord have brought down the high tree - Have dethroned Jehoiachin.

Have exalted the low tree - Put Zedekiah, brother of Jehoiachin, in his place.

Have dried up the green tree - Zedekiah, who had numerous children, but who were all slain before his eyes at Riblah.

And have made the dry tree to flourish - Have raised up a rod out of the stem of Jesse, the family of David being then apparently dried up and extinct. This was the promised Messiah, of the increase and government of whose kingdom and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order and establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. The Zeal of The Lord of Hosts Will Perform This.

The high and green tree, says Newcome, refers to Nebuchadnezzar; the low and the dry tree, to the Jews.