

# EZEKIEL

## Hard to Heart

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### *"Waiting to Expunge"*

12:17-28

*Waiting for Godot* is a play by Samuel Beckett. It is considered one of the most prominent works in the Theatre of the Absurd movement and has been called "the most significant English language play of the 20th century."

The play portrays two days in the lives of a pair of men, Vladimir and Estragon, who divert themselves while they wait expectantly for someone named Godot to arrive. They claim him as an acquaintance but in fact hardly know him, admitting that they would not recognize him were they to see him. To occupy themselves they eat, sleep, converse, argue, sing, play games, exercise, swap hats, and contemplate suicide.

Here is the bottom line: Though they look expectantly for him, Godot never arrives.

The play includes the story of the two thieves crucified on either side of Jesus. God is described as having a white beard and Godot also is said to have a white beard.

One interpreter concludes, "Godot is God. He has cast humanity aside, and though he promises to come back each day, he fails in his promises, and the unjust world goes on."

Ezekiel was quite the actor there on the banks of the river Chebar in Babylon. He had just finished a one-man, one-day engagement during which he dug a hole through the wall of his house and portrayed a man trying to escape for his life during a violent siege by an invading army.

In our verses he began a longer acting engagement in which he would portray a man, and a population, struggling to survive in the aftermath of their city's siege and destruction.

His audience, however, would remain unmoved. Some would say, "The days are prolonged, and every vision fails," while others would say, "The vision... is for many days from now, and he prophesies of time far off."

They were mistaken on both counts. It would not be long at all before the day of the siege would be upon Jerusalem and the prophecies fulfilled.

Ezekiel 12:17 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,  
Ezekiel 12:18 "Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and anxiety.

In his previous 'play' Ezekiel had squeezed through the hole in his wall with a few meager supplies. "Bread" and "water" represented basic and very scarce resources.

Ezekiel had to portray a man reduced to bread and water who was "quaking" and "trembling" with "anxiety." I don't know about you but I have no acting ability. I have no idea how to portray "anxiety" to an audience! Or the difference between "quaking" and "trembling."

We can't be sure how many performances there were daily, or how long this play ran. But we can be sure that the prophet went out as often as the Lord prompted him and ate and drank while anxious and shaking.

The interpretation of the play seemed obvious:

Ezekiel 12:19 And say to the people of the land, 'Thus says the Lord God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the land of Israel: "They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink their water with dread, so that her land may be emptied of all who are in it, because of the violence of all those who dwell in it.

Ezekiel 12:20 Then the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall become desolate; and you shall know that I am the Lord." ' "

Think of this as sort of a narration during or at the end of the portrayal. The people were looking at the inhabitants of Jerusalem who would be displaced when Jerusalem fell.

As I indicated, the exiles in Babylon didn't buy into the prophecies of Jerusalem's demise. They offered one of two arguments. The first is in verses twenty-one and twenty-two.

Ezekiel 12:21 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

Ezekiel 12:22 "Son of man, what is this proverb that you people have about the land of Israel, which says, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision fails'?

God called it a "proverb." It was a false saying that had made its way into the popular language and had become a customary response to the preaching of the truth by the prophets.

On a lesser scale, there are modern 'proverbs' that folks throw-out as excuses. "There are too many hypocrites in the church" is a common one. So it, "There are too many contradictions in the Bible."

"All roads lead to God" might be the most popular.

Their reasoning in the sixth century was that since God's judgment was delayed then it wasn't coming at all.

The apostle Peter dealt with this same reasoning in the first century. In Second Peter 3:3-4 we read,

2 Peter 3:3 ... scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,  
2 Peter 3:4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Peter goes on to point out that things haven't continued without God's intervention. He cites the global flood of Noah's day as historical proof that God does indeed intervene in human history to bring judgment. He could have cited Sodom and Gomorrah, too.

When people fall back on this reasoning there is something they have lost sight of. The longsuffering of God. God waits to bring the judgment He has pronounced because He is not willing that any would perish but that all should come to repentance. To scoff at His supposed delay is to overlook the fact that it is YOU God is waiting for.

People love to blame God for things. Take the disastrous earthquake in Haiti for example. Why didn't God do something to stop it?

Well, God has done something. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the world, to die on the Cross as Substitute and Savior of a rebellious and lost human race. He is acting in history for Jesus to return and, in His Second Coming, to set-up a kingdom on earth during which there will be no such disasters!

He waits while the Gospel is preached so those who are still lost might have opportunity to repent and believe and be saved prior to the great and terrible tribulation that immediately precedes the kingdom on earth.

So, in a very real way, it is humans - unrepentant human beings - who are more responsible for disasters than anyone else.

God's longsuffering waits but it will not wait indefinitely. He's acted in judgment and will again.

Ezekiel 12:23 Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will lay this proverb to rest, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel." But say to them, "The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision.

Ezekiel 12:24 For no more shall there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 12:25 For I am the Lord. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it," says the Lord God.' "

The Lord mentions “false vision” and “flattering divination” among His people. They had His Word; they heard His prophets. They preferred that which was false and flattering.

That which is false ought to be easy enough to detect. Often, but not always, a believer embraces that which is false if they are not familiar enough with the truth. Study that which is genuine - the Word itself - and you will more easily recognize the false.

Another reason we go for the false is we are hesitant to seem skeptical or critical. Everyone seems to be getting blessed by some new idea or teaching. But in your spirit you feel checked - as if it is not quite right. It's hard to go against the flow. But you must!

Then there is the whole concept of flattery. It's amazing who and what a person will fall for when they are being flattered. When people tell you how great you are it only shows how little they know you! The apostle Paul considered himself the “chief of sinners,” not at the beginning of his walk but towards the end.

Don't fall into the trap of flattery. And do not flatter others! By the way: Encouragement is not flattery but often our flattery is passed off as encouragement.

“I will say the word and perform it', says the Lord God.” Our Father is the One who says what He is going to do and then does it exactly as He said. The Bible is complete with fulfilled prophecies. Verifiable, undeniable prophecies that have come to pass.

Factor in, too, the apostle Peter's comment that with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years s like one day. It's ridiculous to

suggest God, who is outside of time constraints, is delaying! His longsuffering waits does not equal a delay.

Ezekiel counters a second proverbial argument in the next couple of verses.

Ezekiel 12:26 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying,  
Ezekiel 12:27 "Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.'

It's gonna happen, but I won't be around to see it, so I don't need to worry about it.

People still feel this way about Bible prophecy. They lump it together with the Mayan's and Nostrodamus and conclude that it doesn't directly affect their daily living.

Again I would suggest that the Bible stands apart in its 100% accuracy. Many centuries-old prophecies are converging in our day - or at least you see the world trending exactly as the Bible predicted.

Ezekiel 12:28 Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "None of My words will be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done," says the Lord God.' "

Instead of thinking in terms of a delay, perhaps 'postponement' would be better. Delay suggests there is a problem. Postponement is a decision to wait.

God's longsuffering waits. If you are not a believer... **It waits for you!**

If you are a believer, it waits for the nonbelievers all around you.