

# A FULL END OF ISRAEL?

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In Ezekiel 11:13, the prophet Ezekiel asked the Lord, “*Wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?*” Ezekiel himself was in Babylon among the captives who had been led away there in 597 B.C. as part of the second and largest of the three waves by which God removed them from the land of Israel. Of course, the answer to Ezekiel’s question would affect the prophet as well as all the other children of Israel at that time. God answered Ezekiel by letting him know that He would *not* make a “full end” of Israel’s remnant. Through both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the Lord informed the people of Israel that most of them would die, but a remnant of them would survive.

## **Jerusalem versus the captives in Babylon**

In His answer to Ezekiel, God divided the “remnant of Israel” into two separate categories. God made a distinction between the remnant who were in captivity in Babylon and those who were still in Jerusalem. The ones who remained in Jerusalem were haughty and in essence told their brethren who had been taken away into captivity, “Good riddance.” Their actual words were: “Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession” (Ezek 11:15). Their argument that they belonged to God and deserved to remain in the land while their brethren did not was quite false. Although the people of Jerusalem justified themselves and condemned the captives as being the wicked ones, God showed that the opposite was true. In Ezekiel 11:16-21, God instructed the prophet to speak these words to the Israelites who remained in Jerusalem: “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; *I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.* And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. *But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.*” Thus, God was going to

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protect the captives in Babylon, give them new hearts as they repented, and eventually would return them to Israel. But the others (i.e. most of the ones still in Jerusalem) would be destroyed because they were beyond hope. This is exactly what God foretold in Jeremiah chapter 24.

## **Jeremiah 24 and the baskets of figs**

In Jeremiah 24:1-2, God showed Jeremiah “two baskets of figs,” one basket containing “*very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad*” (Jer 24:2). In Jeremiah 24:5-7, God identified the ones who had been carried away captive in Babylon as the “good figs,” and foretold their eventual repentance and restoration to the land of Israel, exactly as we saw in Ezekiel chapter 11: “Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. *And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.*” The captivity was for their good, and God would build and plant them, give them a heart to know Him, and return them to the land (Jer 24:6). The “evil figs” included king Zedekiah, his princes, and “the residue of Jerusalem,” and the remaining Jews in Israel and Egypt (Jer 24:8). They would be destroyed by the sword, famine, and pestilence (Jer 24:9-10; see also Jer 14:12; 21:6-10; 27:8,12-13; 29:16-19; 34:17; 38:2-3; 42:17-22; 44:13; Ezek 5:11-12,17; 6:11-14; 7:15; 14:21). Ezekiel 11:13-21 and Jeremiah 24 are in precise agreement, and this was all fulfilled just as God said (Jer 32:24,36; 44:13). This should remind us of the warning in the New Testament in Romans 11:22: “*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*” Galatians 6:7-8 also teaches us: “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*” Let us make certain our heart is right with God now, so we do not end up partaking of His severity and reap eternal destruction.