

# Parable of The Boiling Pot

Eze 24:1-14 (NASB)


The title “Parable of the Boiling Pot” comes from the passage heading in the NASB. The heading in the NIV Bible is “Jerusalem as a Cooking Pot”. Thus, we can clearly identify the Boiling Pot as referring to Jerusalem in Ezekiel’s prophecy (Eze 24:1-5):

*And the word of the LORD came to me in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month, saying, “Son of man, write the name of the day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. **Speak a parable to the rebellious house** and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,*

*“Put on the pot, put it on and also pour water in it;  
Put in it the pieces,  
Every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder;  
Fill it with choice bones. Take the choicest of the flock,  
And also pile wood under the pot.  
Make it boil vigorously. Also seethe its bones in it.”*

Before the parable, the prostitution imagery of Judah in the Book of Ezekiel tells a lot about the prevalent gross level of the kingdom’s moral depravity in pagan worship and political submission to foreign dominance under leaders “*who devise iniquity and give evil advice in this city.*” (Eze 11:2)

The pot and flesh as metaphors in Ezekiel's prophecy on the judgment to come upon the evil rulers were in fact first used complacently by these morally corrupt leaders themselves in Eze 11:3b – **“This city is the pot, and we are the flesh in it.”** (The metaphors were not invented by the prophet.)

With self-conceit, the evil rulers pictured the Jerusalemites as flesh insulated and well-protected in the pot (city), whereby no harm would come to them from outside. **Woe betided them when the supposedly inviolable Jerusalemites would become “Every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder ... choice bones ... the choicest of the flock” to be boiled vigorously with wood piled under the pot!** (Eze 24:1-5) 

Remarkably, God instructed Ezekiel to write down the exact day that “The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem.” (Eze 24:2) If a prophecy is about something going to happen at an unspecified date in the future, such as saying that the world is going to end soon, the intensity of one's feeling would be very different than if it were spoken as happening on a precise date. Whatever emotions the Jerusalemites had on hearing the prophecy, the date was to be a very dark day to be remembered by the bloodstains on the rock. (Eze 24:8)

The prophecy came to pass with Babylon's siege of Jerusalem leading to the destruction of Solomon's Temple. Flesh boiling and bones burning in the pot signified the ferocity of the murderous Babylonian attack and the resultant great suffering of the inhabitants in the city. Adding to the imagery of agony, it was not a clay cooking pot but a pot made with bronze (Eze 24:11) that would be heated up quickly with the contents (Jerusalemites) closed in (allowing no escape) and seethed with fire well-fuelled by a pile of wood.

Jerusalem was judged and censured for her extravagant apostasy. However, before God's wrath descended upon her, she had

opportunities to avoid punishment. The following are two headings of Eze 16 taken from two Bible translations:

- **Jerusalem as an Adulterous Wife** (NIV)

(One of her most detestable pagan worship practices – the sacrifice of children – Eze 16:20-21; 20:25-26)

- **God's Grace to Unfaithful Jerusalem** (NASB)

(God's turnaround from condemnation to mercy begins at Eze 16:60.)

Despite the shocking smugness of the rebellious house immersed in spiritual adultery, the scope of despicability being humiliatingly portrayed by bizarre prostitution imagery, the grace of God was still available.

We can see that God's gracious forbearance in dealing with Unfaithful Jerusalem provided her with many chances to repent:

At first, God called Ezekiel to speak His words to the house of Israel. (Eze 3:4) But the people would not be willing to listen, not because they could not understand but because they were obstinate. (Eze 3:6-7) Then, God withheld Ezekiel's tongue from rebuking them. (Eze 3:26). In Eze 16:1-14, God again instructed the prophet to make known to Jerusalem her abominations.

The prophet made another attempt (Eze 23) *“to break through the hard resistance to his preaching of repentance by confronting the rebellious house with an allegorical satire as shocking to their self-righteous sensibilities as the one recorded in Eze 16.”* – *Notes in The Lutheran Study Bible*

It was because the Hebrew people failed to turn from their paganism and idolatry after being given many chances that the Lord announced the time to act:

*“Jerusalem, you are really impure. I tried to clean you up. But you would not let me make you pure. So you will not be clean again until I am no longer so angry with you.*

*“I have spoken. **The time has come for me to act.** I will not hold back. I will not feel sorry for you. I will do what I said I would do. You will be judged for your conduct and actions. I am the Lord,” announces the Lord and King.” – Eze 24:13-14 (NIRV)*

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## *What is Ezekiel’s message for us today?*

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### **Our promiscuity draws out God’s punishment**

Ezekiel’s ministry extended over troubled times in Israel. [Today we are also in a type of troubled times.](#)

Jerusalem was held captive by Babylon. However, before that, she was already held captive by her own serious moral and spiritual waywardness; and it was this captivity of her souls that drew God’s wrath and punishment upon her. The captivity under Babylon by God’s decree (Eze 21:19-23) was the outcome when she placed her soul captive to spiritual adultery through foolish pursuits and allegiances.

The message of Ezekiel is visibly about God’s wrath against spiritual adultery. It is about people being captive to the profane ways of life and worship with God side-lined.” [How is this about the world today?](#)

According to the notes in The Lutheran Study Bible, *“Modern lewdness in films, songs, and on the Internet similarly mislead people today by alienating them from God, who forbids such things.”*

Humans are adept at vaunting and worshipping economic ascendancy, technological prowess, power influence, etc. The average person is easily pushed along to go after elusive temporal goals to cope with the demands laid out by the worldly forces at play. In the ever-intensifying process, sinful transgressions against God’s rule become subtle and normal. [Our promiscuity towards the ephemeral delights of this world draws out God’s punishment.](#)

### **Hope of restoration for God’s covenant people**

There are 48 chapters in the Book of Ezekiel, and the Parable of the Boiling Pot is in the middle (Chap 24). Let us look at the “before” and “after” of it.

The first 23 chapters of Ezekiel contain a lot of prophetic visions about fire, swords and disasters. Many were foretelling the judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (e.g. Eze 4:1–24:27; 8:1–11:25; 12:1–19:14). The people simply ignored the warnings.

**Before the Boiling Pot experience,** the House of Israel rejected God’s prophetic messages because they cared only for their sinful carefree lifestyle. They would realise too late to taste the reality of God’s judgment when it came to pass. (Eze 33:33)

The reality of the judgment on Jerusalem was not the end of all hope. It was just a part of God’s solution to reign in the rebellion of His covenant people and to uphold His honour. [Nobody should entertain any doubt about the sovereignty of God with these authoritative words “\*\*know that I am the LORD\*\*” appearing in the Book of Ezekiel \(NIV\) 64 times.](#)

After the Boiling Pot experience, Israel received the promise of restoration (Eze 33:1–46:24) with the reality of redemption in prospect. (Eze 47:1–48:35)

God's people in the world today are God's covenant people under the new covenant with Jesus as the mediator. (Lk 22:20; Heb 12:24)

As God's covenant people, we live under His sovereign will; but that does not absolve us from the consequences of God's punishment when we disregard His warnings in Scripture or through His messengers.

Today's world would taste God's wrath just as Israel in Ezekiel's time, whatever forms the reckoning take.

However, God does not hold back restoration and redemption from people who would revert from their rebellion to respecting God's honour and sovereignty.

**Definition of *new covenant***

: a promise of redemption by God to people as individuals rather than as a nation and on the basis of God's grace rather than a person's adherence to the law.

Christ is ... the mediator of a *new covenant*— *Interpreter's Bible*

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/new%20covenant>

Nations or groups may rise or fall by wise decisions or human hubris, not distanced from the warnings that are already there.

Under the new covenant, every person bears individual responsibility for his destiny by accepting or rejecting Christ, the mediator.

*“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28)*

*John Lee*