

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

EZEKIEL

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**GOSPEL
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Preface and Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven members of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these are well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn, Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The material was put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over many decades. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we hardly cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad! "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

Feel free to copy quotations from this material. It is designed to bring glory to God and information to souls! The same goes for the articles printed in my monthly publication: *Studies in the Old Paths*. This paper is free via e-mail.

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INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

A. The Prophet Ezekiel.

1. Language scholars report that the name of the prophet means “God strengthens” or “God is Strong.” Perhaps in his name is found a suggestion of the nature of his work. “...Ezekiel is more vehement than Jeremiah in reproofing the sins of his countrymen...” (Horne, p.222). His mission was one to condemn strongly the sins of the Israelites, which were the cause of Jerusalem’s forthcoming destruction; this called for one who would be strong enough to withstand the criticism and hardship strong preaching elicits from sinners.
 2. The book is auto-biographical in nature. The writer, who calls himself Ezekiel, refers to himself by using first person pronouns. He also attributes the messages he delivers as originating with the Lord. “There have been many attacks made on the authorship of Ezekiel during the 20th century. However they are generally made by those radical critics who deny the supernatural. They cannot accept the *predictive elements* contained in Ezekiel and therefore assert that the book must have been written at a period later than the exile itself” (Pledge, p.157).
 3. Ezekiel was taken into Babylonian captivity during the second capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; this was in 597 B.C.
 - a. In 606 B.C., when Jehoiakim rebelled against his Babylonian overlords, Nebuchadnezzar came against him and captured Jerusalem. Daniel and others were removed to Babylon at that time. "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god" (Dan. 1:1-2).
 - b. At the death of Jehoiakim in 597 B.C., Jehoiachin his son ascended Judah’s throne. His rebellion brought a quick end to his claim to the throne, when the Babylonians deposed and imprisoned him. After this incursion, a large number of Israelites were deported to Babylon, including Ezekiel.
 - 1) Ezekiel 1:1-3: "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him." His reference to *the thirtieth year* is most likely a statement about his age when his prophetic call was issued. Since this was during the fifth year of captivity, it follows that he was about twenty-five when he was carried into Babylonia.
 - 2) 2 Kings 24:14-16: "And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, *even* ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, *those* carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And all the men of might, *even* seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all *that were* strong *and* apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."
 4. Ezekiel was both a prophet and a priest. “Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him" (Ezek.
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1:1-3).

- a. His call to the prophetic office came when he was in his fifth year of captivity, during his thirtieth year of life. This was about 593 B.C., about seven years before the Babylonians destroyed the temple and Jerusalem, and dispersed the remaining Israelites.
 - b. His messages are dated with reference to the years in captivity. The first was during his fifth year in Babylonia (593 B.C.); the last was during his twenty-seventh year (570 B.C.). "And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying" (Ezek. 29:17).
5. In the land of captivity, Daniel gained a most exalted position in Babylon, serving the king himself, but Ezekiel labored among the captives, living in a rural community. He occupied the position as watchman of the Jews. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezek. 3:17-19).
6. We are told that Ezekiel married while in captivity, but that his wife died when Jerusalem was besieged. "Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying....Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded" (Ezek. 24:1, 15-18).

B. The Purpose of the Book of Ezekiel.

1. "It was Ezekiel's task to impress upon the exiles the fact that calamity had come because of their own sinfulness. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Thus, the prophecy inculcates the great doctrine of personal responsibility....God, however, does not delight in the death of the wicked....Thus, the book reveals the faithfulness of God to his eternal purposes. The sinful nation must be destroyed, but yet God will not forsake his own" (Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, p.244).
2. "Ezekiel was raised by God to prophesy at a time when *lying prophets* were saying to the people that God would break the yoke of Babylon in two years, Jer. 29. One of these was Hananiah, Jer. 28:1-4; 5:17; 29:21-32. Both *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel* were vindicated in their prophecies when the false prophets were proved liars at the destruction of Jerusalem. However, at this time there was a desperate need of the people to be saved from their despair. This accounts for the many assurances of the prophet that if the people would turn and willingly serve the Lord, the Lord would take them back to their own land" (Pledge, p.159).
3. "For eleven years about 10,000 exiles were living in a concentration camp in Babylon while Jeremiah and the folks at home tried to keep things going. For five years, these captives in Babylon had no prophet to preach to them. Then Ezekiel began his work. His *first work* was to remove their false hopes. They were living in a false sense of security with the hope of an early return home. He *next* tried to prepare them for the news of the tragic destruction of the beloved Jerusalem. His chief work was to *comfort* the faithful and encourage them to trust in the Lord more" (Pledge, p.159).
4. It was Ezekiel's task to keep the Jewish captives faithful to the Lord in the land of idolatry, which required him to expose the false prophets, and give them reason for hope. His book contains certain visions on the order of John's visions in Revelation.

C. The Work of a Prophet, from Exodus 4:10-17.

1. Verse 10: "And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."
 - a. Moses claimed an inability to speak with any eloquence, neither before nor since God had first spoken to him; he claimed to be a man slow of speech and of a slow tongue.
 - b. This is contradictory to the description given of him by Stephen in Acts 7:22. Stephen is probably describing Moses in his early Egyptian years; after forty years of tending to sheep, and conversing with his wife and her relatives in a tongue not his native language, it is possible that he had lost much of his former ability.
 2. Verse 11: "And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?"
 - a. God did not propose a miraculous operation on Moses' speech-making ability. He simply reminded Moses that it is God who has made man's mouth. God provides the natural talents, gives opportunities for their development, and issues instruction and motivation in his written word for their use to his glory and for the benefit of mankind. He holds each individual responsible for the use, misuse, or disuse of those talents and opportunities. God has never sent anyone on a mission without providing the necessities for the accomplishment of the work at hand.
 - b. Matthew 10:19: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak."
 - c. Mark 16:15-20: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
 - d. Compare: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me....But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
 3. Verses 12-13: "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of *him whom* thou wilt send."
 - a. With these words, God rejects Moses' latest excuse. "You do your part in this great work, and I will take care of your mouth, and teach you what needs to be said." Jesus made a similar promise to his apostles (Matt. 10:19; Mark 13:11; John 14:26; John 16:13; Acts 2:1-4).
 - b. The words which Moses was to speak would actually be God's words. The Bible speaks of the Law as being God's and Moses'. It speaks of the words given through Moses as being God's words (Ex. 3:6; Mt. 22:31-32). Moses recorded it but God spoke it.
 4. Verse 14: "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is* not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart."
 - a. The Lord's patience had been tried, so he spoke with anger in responding to this latest excuse. He mentions Aaron, the Levite, Moses' brother, whom God knew to be an able speaker. Even now Aaron was enroute to meet with Moses. God had foreseen all these developments and had planned accordingly. Even before speaking with Moses, he had possibly instructed Aaron to depart from Egypt to meet his younger brother at Horeb (see verse 27). The Lord gave Philip instruction to leave Samaria and journey southward in order to meet with the Ethiopian (Acts 8). This required the evangelist to leave a great gospel meeting and begin his journey even before the eunuch left Jerusalem.
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- b. God is all-wise and all-knowing, and his operations are well-planned and marvelous. Aaron was to share in the great work of delivering Israel. Moses became a very great man for his work as deliverer and lawgiver; but had it not been for his reluctance at the beginning, perhaps he would have been even greater, since he would not have shared with Aaron the task of convincing Pharaoh to release Israel. God even knew the gladness his brother would have to see Moses again after so many years!
5. Verses 15-17: "And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even* he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs."
- a. The procedure God now proposed was this: He would speak to Moses; Moses would give the words to Aaron who would in turn speak the words. "And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." God spoke through Moses to Israel; similarly, Moses would speak through Aaron to Pharaoh" (Exod. 7:1).



- b. These verses provide a description of what the work of a prophet was: a spokesman for God. The subject might deal with the past, present or future; but the words were God's in either case. One false view of inspiration is refuted by this truth: the idea that God only gave the idea and left it to the prophet to express it in his own words. God gave the very words he wanted used. Compare:
- 1) Matthew 22:31-32: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." [The argument turned on the difference between the tense of the verb—*am*, not *was*].
 - 2) Galatians 3:16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." [This argument turned on the difference between the singular *seed* and the plural *seeds*].

D. Apocalyptic Literature [from Author's Notes on Revelation].

1. The word "Revelation" in Revelation 1:1 is from the Greek word *apokalupsis* ("apocalypse").
 - a. The meaning of the word is "something not concealed; an uncovering, a laying bare, making naked." It is from the root word *apokalupto* meaning "to uncover, unveil."
 - b. The book uncovers (unveils) by the use of symbols, signs, imagery, and visions. It seeks to prepare the people for the persecutions that were then impending.
 - c. The apocalyptic method prevented the enemies of Christianity from understanding the message, while making known to the saints the "things which must shortly come to pass."
 2. Apocalyptic literature is a special kind of writing.
 - a. Only Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah (and parts of other prophets) are apocalyptic in the Old Testament; Revelation is the only one in the New Testament.
 - b. A fairly large number of counterfeit books containing apocalyptic literature were written between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. These uninspired writings are called the "Apocrypha" and "pseudepigrapha."
 - c. Inspired apocalyptic writings always came during a period of trial and suffering. The information in Ezekiel was given during the period of captivity. This helps us to see why the information was recorded in the apocalyptic form.
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- 1) It protected the writer and the readers.
- 2) It hid the message from enemies and revealed it to the friends.
3. There are comparisons to be drawn between prophecy and apocalyptic literature.
 - a. Both contain predictive elements, however:
 - 1) Prophecies are usually specific: Cyrus was called by name before his birth; a period of 70 years of captivity was predicted for sinful Israel.
 - 2) The predictive element of the apocalypse is more general; it is not intended to deal with specific matters, but is broader in outlook, and often deals with longer periods of time.
 - b. The scope of the apocalypse is greater.
 - 1) The prophet may deal with the present, then jump to matters far into the future and back again. This change is obvious in the text.
 - 2) The apocalyptic writer combines present, past, and future all in one unit, with one sweeping motion.
 - c. There is a difference in the form between the two styles of writing. Prophetic visions are descriptive in order to exhort, and not to predict. In prophecy, symbols are usually natural; in apocalyptic they are usually arbitrary (they do not follow a set rule).
4. Some characteristics of apocalyptic literature.
 - a. There is always a historical significance of a critical nature. The book of Revelation was written during the reign of a tyrant. It is important to know the history of the times described in order to see the events predicted.
 - b. The message is presented mainly through visions. These are often highly elaborate.
 - c. It deals chiefly with the character of the events predicted rather than with details. Isaiah 7:14 (a prophecy of Christ's virgin birth) deals with minute detail, but apocalyptic writers were intent on dealing with the character of the events described and not the close details.
 - d. Symbols are used extensively. The writer had to describe events that could not be put into plain words. Symbolism is a system in which qualities, ideas, and principles are represented, not plainly stated.
 - e. It has a dramatic effect. The meaning of the figure is to be discerned by viewing it in broad perspective as a whole and not by trying to determine the meaning of each minute detail. One must not become so interested in the actor that he forgets the plot and its meaning (Ray Summers, *Worthy is the Lamb*, p.26).

E. A Brief Outline of Ezekiel [adapted from Pledge, pp.160-164]:

1. The Call and Preparation of the Ezekiel: 1:1—3:27.
 - a. His call: 1:1-28.
 - b. His work: 2:1-10.
 - c. He is sent forth: 3:1-27.
 2. Prophecies against Judah before the Fall of Jerusalem: 4:1—24:27.
 - a. The destiny of the city and people: 4:1—5:17.
 - b. Judgment against idolaters: 6:1-14.
 - c. Israel overthrown: 7:1-27.
 - d. Vision of Jerusalem's fall: 8:1—11:25.
 - e. Zedekiah's capture and the sorrow that follows: 12:1-28.
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- f. Prophecy against false prophets: 13:1-23.
 - g. God's attitude toward idolaters: 14:1-23.
 - h. Uselessness of Jerusalem: 15:1-8.
 - i. Ingratitude and faithlessness of Jerusalem: 16:1-63.
 - j. The house of David humbled and exalted: 17:1-24.
 - k. Retribution of God: 18:1-32.
 - l. Lamentation for the princes of Israel: 19:1-14.
 - m. Israel's past, present, and future: 20:1-44.
 - n. The burning forest and the sword of the Lord: 20:45—21:32.
 - o. The sins of Israel: 22:1-31.
 - p. Aholah and Aholibah: 23:1-49.
 - q. The prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem: 24:1-27.
3. The Prophecy of Judgment upon the Nations: Ezekiel 25:1—32:32.
- a. Against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia: 25:1-17.
 - b. Against Tyre and Sidon: 26:1—28:26.
 - c. Prophecy against Sidon and promise for Israel: 28:20-26.
 - d. Against Egypt: 29:1—32:32.
4. An Announcement of Salvation: Ezekiel 33:1—48:35.
- a. The prophet as a watchman: 33:1-33.
 - b. Israel restored and Gog and Magog destroyed: 34:1—39:29.
 - c. The new temple: 40:1—43:12.
 - d. The new worship: 43:13—46:24.
 - e. Distribution of blessings among Israel: 47:1— 48:35.
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EZEKIEL 1

A. Ezekiel 1:1-3: The Call of Ezekiel to the Prophetic Office.

1. Verses 1-2: "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity."
- a. An article from Holman's PC dictionary on ancient calendars is found at the end of this chapter. The following chart shows the Jewish calendar with their modern counterparts:

	JEWISH MONTH	MODERN MONTH
1	Abib (Nisan)	March—April
2	Iym (Zif)	April—May
3	Sivan	May—June
4	Tammaz	June—July
5	Ab	July—August
6	Elul	August—September
7	Tisri	September—October
8	Bul	October—November
9	Chisleu	November—December
10	Tebeth	December—January
11	Shebat	January—February
12	Adar	February—March

- b. Ezekiel's messages are dated by references to the day, month, and year. The first revelation he was given is dated in the fourth month, fifth day, of the thirtieth year. In this case, the *thirtieth year* most likely refers to the prophet's age when this message was revealed. The second verse dates the time as the fifth day of the month of Jehoiachin's imprisonment. Ezekiel 29:17 gives the date for that message as the first day of the first month in the *twenty-seventh* year of Jehoiachin's captivity. He and Jehoiachin were taken to Babylon at the same time. His career spanned twenty-two (or more) years.
- c. "In the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign (Jer. 2:59) Jeremiah sent by Seraiah a message to the captives (Jer. 29) to submit themselves to God, and lay aside their flattering hopes of a speedy restoration. This communication [Ezek. 1:1ff] was in the next year, the *fifth*, and the fourth month of the same king (for Jehoiachin's captivity, and Zedekiah's accession coincide in them), *followed up* by a prophet raised up among the captives themselves, the energetic Ezekiel" (JFB, p.203).
- d. Ezekiel lived near the river Chebar, which flowed into the Euphrates near Babylon. He was thirty years old at the time, the prescribed age for priests to begin their work. "From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation....From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years

old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num. 4:23, 30). Ezekiel was a priest and was now to become a prophet. His priestly work would end when he turned fifty, but, he was unable to work at the temple. It is noteworthy that his last prophetic message was received when he was about fifty-two years of age.

- e. On the day indicated in the text, the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God. These visions were from God and depicted the glory of God.
2. Verse 3: "The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him."
 - a. "The place Ezekiel was when he saw the visions was in the captivity by the river Chebar, in Babylon, 'the land of the Chaldeans' (1:3, at Tel-abib (3:15). Some critics have tried to establish a discrepancy here, citing II Kings 24:15 which says the exiles had been taken to Babylon, whereas the river Chebar is outside of Babylon the city. However, Babylon speaks of the whole empire, which at this time, incidentally, was also known as Chaldea. The archaeologists have located a large settlement of Jews on the Chebar, where they were restricted (captives) as to their place to live; they were not in actual imprisonment" (Cates, MSOP, pp.36f).
 - b. The captives must have been in a very depressed state of mind when Ezekiel began his work. The psalmist gave the following description of them prophetically: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Ps. 137:1-6).
 - c. The word of the Lord came expressly to him. He was filled with the power and influence to equip him for the prophetic office. The source of this revelation is specifically said to be heaven (verse 1).
 - 1) 2 Peter 1:20-21: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) 2 Samuel 23:1-2: "Now these *be* the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue."
 - 3) Acts 1:16: "Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."

B. Ezekiel 1:4-14: A Description of the Glorious Beings.

1. Verses 4-6: "And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness *was* about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings."
- a. A whirlwind denoted judgment. "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up" (Hos. 8:7).
- b. The whirlwind is depicted as coming from the north. This is from the perspective of Palestine The present enemies of Israel would invade the land from the north, since it was not feasible for the army of Babylon to approach the land from the east, from the desert.
 - 1) Jeremiah 1:14: "Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all

- the inhabitants of the land."
- 2) Jeremiah 4:6: "Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction."
 - 3) Jeremiah 6:1: "O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jeru-salem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction."
- c. A great cloud was associated with the whirlwind. This cloud had fire *infolding itself*. "A mass of fire concentrated in a vast cloud, that the flames might be more distinctly observable, the fire never escaping from the cloud, but issuing, and then returning in upon itself. It was in a state of powerful agitation..." (Clarke, p.425).
 - d. There was a brightness about the cloud. As in-cloud lightning brightens the thundercloud at night, so the fire within this cloud illumined it, making it at the same time both awesome and beautiful. The core of the cloud was amber in color.
 - e. Issuing from the heart of the cloud appeared the likeness of four living creatures. Each had the image of a man, each had four faces and four wings. Apparently each creature had a face on each side of its head.
2. Verses 7-11: "And their feet *were* straight feet; and the sole of their feet *was* like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus *were* their faces: and their wings *were* stretched upward; two *wings* of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered their bodies."
 - a. "There has been and remains much *speculation* relative to these four cherubims and what their faces, their wings, and other factors involved in their appearance represent. However, it would be wise to keep in mind that these are connected with the glory of God and that the glory of God is appearing to Ezekiel to impress upon his mind the ever present majesty and supremacy of God. Ezekiel was to prophesy to the captives to instill in them hope, courage and faith to enable them to remain loyal to God. There must be a deep impression made upon him to help him to remain true and loyal in his difficult task. The same sort of impression was made upon Isaiah (Isaiah 6) in order to fortify him for the task of preaching to a hardened and reprobate people who would not repent" (Pledge, p.164).
 - b. The reference to the foot being straight is taken by some to denote the leg (Keil, Vol. I, Clarke, NKJ). In this case, the leg was straight, without any bending capabilities. If the foot is meant, as the text of the KJV and ASV indicates, then the foot was not horizontal, but vertical, as in a calf's. The text describes the bottom of the foot as being like that of a calf. The color of these beings sparkled or glistened like highly polished brass. The part that sparkled might be limited to the leg and foot. Compare: "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters" (Rev. 1:15).
 - c. The hand of a man was under each wing, perhaps suggesting that the work done by these angelic beings was at least partially concealed from humanity. Each one had a face and wing [s] on four sides. "They had no occasion to turn themselves round when changing their direction, for they had a face (v.6) looking to each of the four quarters of heaven....Their wings were 'joined' above in pairs (see v.11)" (JFB, p.205). Apparently, when they moved, there was no flapping of the wings, but they simply glided.
 - d. "When their wings were extended, they formed a sort of canopy level with their own heads or shoulders; and on this canopy was the throne and the 'likeness of the man' upon it, ver..26)" (Clarke, p.426). "The definite statement, that 'the wings were joined one to another,' is in ver. 11 is limited
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to the two upper wings, according to which we have so to conceive the matter, that the top or the upper right wing of each cherub came in contact with the top of the left wing of the neighbouring cherub. This junction presented to the eye of the seer the unity and coherence of all the four creatures as a complete whole..." (Keil, Vol. I, p.24).

- e. Each of these beings had the faces of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle. The face of the man would denote wisdom and intelligence; the face of the ox would indicate strength; the face of the lion signifies kingly authority; and the face of an eagle would suggest swiftness and farsightedness.
 - f. "The Revised Version rightly strikes out the comma after 'lion' [verse 10]. The human face meets the prophet's gaze. On the right he sees the lion, on the left the ox, while the face of the eagle is behind. What did the symbols mean? (1) The human face represents the thought that man, as made 'after the image of God' (Gen 1:27), is the highest symbol of the Eternal. So long as we remember that it is but a symbol, anthropomorphism is legitimate in thought, and appropriate in visions; though, like theriomorphism, it becomes perilous, and is therefore forbidden (Ex 20:4; Deut 4:17) when it takes concrete form in metal or in stone. So Daniel (Dan 7:9,13) sees the 'Ancient of Days' and 'one like unto a son of man;' and St. John's vision (Rev 1:13) represents the same symbolism. (2) The lion had been the familiar emblem of sovereignty, both in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 7:29) and in his palace (1 Kings 10:20; 2 Chron 9:18, 19). So, in Gen 49:9, it is the symbol of the kingly power of Judah, and appears with a yet higher application in Rev 5:5; while, on the other hand, it represents one of the great monarchies of the world in Dan 7:4. Its modern heraldic use in the arms of England and elsewhere presents yet another analogue. (3) The ox had appeared, as here, so also in 1 Kings 7:25,44, in company with the lion, notably in the twelve oxen that supported the 'sea' or 'laver' in the temple. Here also we have a kind of sovereignty—the natural symbol of a strength made subservient to human uses....(4) The eagle was, in like manner, though not taking its place in the symbolism of the temple, the emblem of kingly power, and is so employed by Ezekiel himself in Ezek 17:3,7; while in Dan 7:4 the lion has eagle's wings (comp. Hos 8:1; Isa 46:11; Obad 4; Hab 1:8). In Assyrian sculpture Nisroch (the name is cognate with the Hebrew for 'eagle,' *neshar*) appears as an eagle-headed human figure, and is always represented as contending with or conquering the lion and the bull (Layard, 'Nineveh,' 2:458, 459)....[Verse 11] Thus were their faces: and, etc.; better, with Revised Version, and their faces and their wings were separate above; i.e. were stretched upward, touching the neighbouring wings at the tip, and so 'joined, while the other two covered the bodies and were never stretched (comp. Isa 6:2)" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
3. Verses 12-14: "And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; *and* they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, *and* like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."
 - a. The movement is not described as making progress by taking measured steps; no turning is indicated in their movement. Regardless of the direction of travel, there was a face pointed in that direction. Their motion is described as "a flash of lightning" (in one swift movement). Their movement was in keeping with the dictates of the spirit which directed them.
 - b. "The whole substance appeared to be of flame; and among them frequent coruscations of fire, like vibrating lamps, often emitting lighting, or rather sparks of fire, as we have seen struck out of strongly ignited iron in a forge" (Clarke, p.426).

C. Ezekiel 1:15-21: The Wheels.

1. Verses 15-16: "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work *was* like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."

- a. It would be foolhardy and speculative to try to apply specific interpretations to the various features of this vision. The overall picture is obviously intended to present the glory and magnificence of the Almighty. If we can perceive this from the passage, we will have gleaned the primary point.
 - b. In the vision, Ezekiel saw wheels within wheels. “Accordingly, we have so to represent the matter, that by the side of the four cherubim, namely, beside his front face, a wheel was to be seen upon the earth. Ezekiel then say four wheels, one on each front of a cherub, and therefore immediately speaks in ver. 16 of wheels (in the plural)...The construction of the wheels was as if one wheel were within a wheel, *i.e.* as if in the wheel a second were inserted at right angles, so that without being turned it could go towards all the four sides” (Keil, Vol. I, p.27).
 - c. “The color of the wheels was likely that of fire. All four wheels gave the same appearance; each had another wheel at right angles ‘in the midst of’ (ASV margin) a wheel, thus the four faces. The bisected wheels could therefore move in any of four directions, just as could the creatures with their four faces. [Note: in apocalyptic literature, which this is, things are described which are not possible in nature, such as a ‘wheel within a wheel,’ at right angles]” (Cates, MSOP, p.52).
2. Verses 17-21: “When they went, they went upon their four sides: *and* they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither *was their* spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels. When those went, *these* went; and when those stood, *these* stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels.”
- a. The English Standard Version has this translation: “When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went. And their rims were tall and awesome, and the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.”
 - b. The beings could travel in either of the four directions; there was a face toward each direction; and the wheels associated with them were so constructed to permit movement in each direction. The *rings* may be a reference to the circumference of the wheels (Jamieson); Clarke refers these rings to the “rim or periphery.” These rings were full of eyes.
 - c. The wheels accompanied the beings wherever they were directed by the spirit to go. The wheels were “over against” the beings; they were alongside them.
 - d. “The ‘rings’ or ‘felloes’ of the wheels impressed the prophet's mind with a sense of awe, partly from their size, partly from their being ‘full of eyes.’ These were obviously, as again in Ezek 10:12, and in the analogues of the ‘stone with seven eyes’ in Zech 3:9; 4:10, and the ‘four beasts [i.e. 'living creatures'] full of eyes,’ in Rev 4:6, symbols of the omniscience of God working through the forces of nature and of history. These were not, as men have sometimes thought, blind forces, but were guided as by a supreme insight (comp. 2 Chron 16:9). The wheels went by them; better, with Revised Version, beside them; i.e. moving in parallel lines with them” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

D. Ezekiel 1:22-28: The Throne.

1. Verses 22-25: “And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature *was* as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. And under the firmament *were* their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two,

which covered on that side, their bodies. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice from the firmament that *was* over their heads, when they stood, *and* had let down their wings.”

- a. Above the heads of the beings was a firmament, which evidently denotes the throne of God, for issuing forth from this firmament, is the voice of the Almighty which the prophet hears (verses 26-27). The firmament is described as a “terrible crystal.” It was dazzling in its brightness.
 - b. When the beings were passing through the air, Ezekiel heard the sound as the noise of great waters. This does not necessarily mean that they flapped their wings, but more likely the sound was produced by the air passing about their wings. Part of the wings were outstretched; the other wings covered their sides. When they stopped, those wings used in the flight were lowered.
2. Verses 26-28: And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake."
- a. Upon the firmament was the likeness of a throne. This throne is described with figurative language which presents a glorious appearance to the mind's eye.
 - b. Seated upon the throne was the likeness of a man. Only a figurative description of this being on the throne is given. It is obvious that the Almighty is the one on the throne. Compare: "And they saw the God of Israel: and *there was* under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in *his* clearness" (Exod. 24:10).
 - c. Above the throne was a rainbow, in resplendent brightness. Ezekiel states that what he has seen was “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” The prophet was properly impressed by this glorious vision, and fell upon his face as he heard the voice of the Almighty speak.
3. The following interpretation of the imagery has been suggested:
- a. The semblance of man is given because man is the crown of God's creation; he is formed in the image of God.
 - b. The throne above the firmament depicts the ideal of God as the source of all revelation, the sovereign ruler of the universe.
 - c. The living creatures under the firmament are representative of the support undergirding God's throne.
 - d. The four faces and four wings are representative of the universal creation over which God presides, signified by the man, the lion, the ox, and the eagle.
 - e. The four-fold wings symbolize swiftness and obedience with which divine judgments are executed.
 - f. The outspread wings suggest the readiness by which the divine commands are to be obeyed.
 - g. The wheels are symbols of all the agencies of divine governments, moving at the command of him who occupies the throne. Cf. Psalm 148.
 - h. The innumerable eyes on the rim of the wheels indicate the omniscience and the infinite wisdom by which God operates. Cf. Psalm 139.
4. Other Old and New Testament prophets saw similar scenes to that which is described in this chapter.
- a. Isaiah 6:1-8: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with
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twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

- b. Zechariah 1:8-17: "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that *were* in the bottom; and behind him *were there* red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what *are* these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these *be*. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These *are they* whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me *with* good words *and* comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen *that are* at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."
- c. Revelation 1:10-20: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

E. Calender information:

1. "The Old Testament mentions days, months, and years, the basic elements of a calendar; but it has no prescription for regulating one. It was in the rabbinical period that the written treatise on Jewish traditions, *Rosh Hashanah*, a part of the Mishna, organized the biblical data into the detailed calendrical system that the Jews observe today. We can assume that what the rabbis codified was in general practice among the Jews of the first century, the time of Christ and the apostles, but the New Testament offers little direct
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calendrical data. Periods into which certain important events are dated mention not the day and month, but the name of one or another of the ancient Jewish festivals: the Passover (usually in the passion pericopes, Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 18-19; otherwise at Luke 2:41 and at seven passages in John preceding the passion); the day of Pentecost (the Jewish feast of Weeks), Acts 2:1, 20:16, 1 Corinthians 16:8; and the feast of dedication (Jewish Hanukkah), John 10:22-23. The New Testament offers no evidence that the Jews inside or outside Palestine observed the Roman calendar commencing on January 1, but the apocryphal book 1 Maccabees and the Jewish historian Josephus do substitute Greek (Macedonian) month names for Jewish month names. We may assume that in business dealings Greek-speaking Jews made free use of them. This was little more than a linguistic convention, however, since the Greek months corresponded with the Jewish months, making little difference in the basis of calendrical reckoning. The year Anthropological evidence from many regions show that it was possible in the most ancient times to chart the course of the sun in its annual orbit, which occurs in approximately 365¼ days. The vernal and autumnal equinoxes (the day in the spring and fall, respectively, when days and nights are of equal lengths) were commonly designated as the beginning of a new year. From biblical data and from Near Eastern writings we know that all the peoples from the Mesopotamian area, as well as the Arabians, the Greeks, and the Romans, chose the first, unquestionably because spring is when new life sprouts forth. In Phoenicia, Canaan, and Israel, however, the fall date was chosen, probably for the reason that harvesting marked the end of one agricultural cycle and prepared for the next. In the exilic and postexilic periods, the Jews shifted to the spring new year, but since rabbinic times the fall new year has been observed.

2. “From biblical and archaeological evidence we are able to describe three different ways for reckoning the years and dividing up the months from one new year to the next. Each of them reflects a different social system and religious ideology.
 - a. “First, a basically agricultural society is reflected in the “Gezer Calendar” discovered by R.A.S. Macalister. This is actually a schoolboy exercise in which primitive Hebrew letters are scratched on a clay tablet. It reads:
 - 1) “His two months are (olive) harvest,
His two months are planting (grain),
His two months are late planting;
His month is hoeing up of flax,
His month is harvest of barley,
His month is harvest and feasting;
His two months are vine-tending,
His month is summer fruit. (trans. by W.F. Albright, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*)
 - 2) “Two things are important to observe: (1) the list commences in the fall and ends with the following summer; (2) because it alternates between two-month and one-month periods and does not name or number the months, we can see that the succession of agricultural activities determines the order of items, and that the year is conceived on the succession of agricultural events rather than on astronomical observation.
 - b. “Second, the entire Old Testament moves on to a lunar-solar calendar that is based on observation of the heavenly bodies and regulates a more sophisticated order of economic and religious activity. This type of calendar had wide currency among the more advanced societies. It is called “lunar-solar” because it allowed the sun’s orbit to mark the years’ beginning, but based the beginning of months on observation of the phases of the moon. The first appearance of the new moon would mark the new month. According to the Talmud, the priests would watch for this and proclaim it by sending messengers and blowing trumpets. The problem is, first, that the moon’s circuit is about 29½ days,

forcing a vacillation between a 30-day and a 29-day month; and second, that twelve of these moon/months equal $354\frac{1}{4}$ days, about eleven days short of the solar year. From the Babylonians the Hebrews learned to add an extra month every two or three years. In rabbinical times this 'intercalary' month was inserted seven times in nineteen years.

- c. "Third, a sect known as the Essenes created a purely solar calendar that combined mathematical calculation with a special ideology. Discarding observation of the new moon, the Essenes gave each month thirty days but added a special day at the end of each three-month period, giving a year of 364 days. We have reason to believe that when this party tried to put this calendar into practice, the Temple authorities drove them into exile. It would have disrupted the official religious festival cycle based on the lunar-solar year. We know about this erratic calendar only from sectarian books like the scrolls of Qumran.
 3. "In addition to knowing that the length of months varied and that a new-year date in the spring or fall determined which of them was first, we are able to observe through Israel's history an interesting development in the naming of the months. These names reflected the presence of one or another dominating cultural influence, first that of the Canaanites, then that of Mesopotamia.
 4. "The earliest practice was to use the Canaanite month-names, of which four survive in the Bible: Abib (March-April); Ziv (April-May); Ethanim (September-October); and Bul (October-November) (Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; 1 Kings 6:1, 37-38; 8:3). The other Canaanite months are known from Phoenician inscriptions. These are all agricultural names and reflect a seasonal pattern of reckoning, as in the Gezer calendar.
 5. "The usual practice in the Old Testament is to simply number the months from first to twelfth. Some of these numbered months are found in the passages mentioned above, hence the practice must be at least as early as the time of the Israelite monarchy. Because the first month is always in the spring, we must trace this practice back to the patriarchs, who would have learned it in Mesopotamia (Gen. 11:31).
 6. "When the Jews returned from Babylonian Exile, they brought with them the names of the Babylonian calendar, at the same time counting the new year from the spring. Although the rabbis returned to an autumnal new year, Judaism retains these Babylonian names as its own: Nisan (March-April); Iyyar (April-May); Sivan (May-June); Tammuz (June-July); Ab (July-August); Elul (August-September); Tishri (September-October); Marcheshvan (October-November); Chislev (November-December); Tebeth (December-January); Shebat (January-February); Adar (February-March). The intercalated year is called *WeAdar*, "and-Adar." (Holman, J. De Vries).
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EZEKIEL 2

A. Ezekiel 2:1-8: The Voice of the One on the Throne.

1. Verses 1-2: "And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me."
 - a. Ezekiel is addressed as "son of man." The expression appears 93 times in the book. It denotes the humanity of the prophet, as it does in the cases where the expression is used in reference to Christ.
 - 1) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
 - 2) John 12:34: "The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?"
 - b. The voice of the Almighty (1:24,28) spoke intelligible words to Ezekiel. God instructed him to stand up and receive the message that was to be given.
 - c. He received the spirit of inspiration at that moment.
 - 1) Matthew 22:43-44: "He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?"
 - 2) John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."
 - 3) Acts 1:16: "Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."
 - 4) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - 5) Revelation 1:10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."
2. Verses 3-5: "And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day. For *they are* impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them."
 - a. God plainly outlined the mission he had in store for Ezekiel, and he did not try to describe the work as being anything but difficult. He wanted the prophet to know ahead of time that the job would be most difficult.
 - b. Christ told the apostles that their work would be hard and dangerous, and would not earn for them the gratitude of the majority. What the apostles were told about their mission is also true of the work we are assigned to do.
 - 1) Matthew 10:16-20: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise

- as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."
- 2) John 16:1-3: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me."
- c. If Ezekiel did his work as directed, the rebellious Israelites would be well aware that a prophet of God had been among them. It was the prophet's job to deliver the message; he would be faithful if he did so, regardless of the reception his message had with those to whom it was presented.
- 1) A prophet was one who spoke for God; he was empowered to reveal the future or in some other miraculous way to demonstrate his credentials.
 - 2) Ezekiel is known as a prophet of hope for Israel, but before he could provide them with hope, they had to come back to God's law; and before they could return, they had to repent; but before they could repent, they had to have their sins exposed. By virtue of his work, the people of Israel would know that a genuine prophet had been among them.
 - 3) When they saw the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies regarding the fall of Jerusalem, then they would be fully aware that a prophet had indeed been in their midst.
3. Verse 6: "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns *be* with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house."
- a. Ezekiel could expect opposition from Israel toward his work. The people are described as "briers and thorns" and "scorpions." When the prophet begins to deal with them, their retorts to his preaching will be as sharp as briers and their speech will have the sting of scorpions.
- 1) 2 Samuel 23:6: "But *the sons* of Belial *shall be* all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands."
 - 2) Isaiah 9:18: "For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke."
- b. Ezekiel is warned against being afraid of them. The Lord's enemies would become his enemies; they would appear very powerful and ferocious, but they needed the information the prophet had for them. They would perceive him as an enemy, but his work was in their best interest.
- 1) Jeremiah was given a similar word of caution. "Be not afraid of their faces: for *I am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD....Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them" (Jer. 1:8, 17).
 - 2) Paul had to fight against a similar fearful problem in Corinth.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 2:3: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."
 - b) Acts 18:9-10: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."
 - 3) We are likewise warned against letting the opponents of the gospel terrorize us. "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power
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to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:4-5).

- c. What modern man needs to be taught is not usually what he wants to learn. Those who would teach him God's word will be treated as deadly enemies, but in fact they are sinful man's best friends! "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).
4. Verses 7-8: "And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they *are* most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee."
 - a. Ezekiel was commanded to deliver to Israel the message he was given. Although they would not be inclined to heed it, he was to present it. God told him ahead of time that they would not be disposed to accept his inspired revelations.
 - 1) Jonah 3:2: "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
 - b. He is cautioned against becoming like the rest of Israel. He was to keep himself from also becoming a rebel; he was to open his mouth and eat the message of truth he was to receive. Similar figures were given to other prophets:
 - 1) Jeremiah 15:16: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."
 - 2) Revelation 10:9-10: "And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter."

B. Ezekiel 2:9-10: The Hand Holding the Scroll.

1. Verse 9: "And when I looked, behold, an hand *was* sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book *was* therein."
 - a. In this marvelous vision which displayed the glory of God, Ezekiel now sees a hand extending toward him a roll of a book. The scroll is representative of the inspired revelations he was to receive.
 - b. Ancient books were made from materials which were designed to be rolled up. As one leaf was read, it was rolled onto a kind of spindle; as this was done, the next leaf was unrolled from the other spindle.
 2. Verse 10: "And he spread it before me; and it *was* written within and without: and *there was* written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe."
 - a. The scroll he was given had writing on both sides (within and without). "Usually the parchment was written only on its *inside* when rolled up; but so full was God's message of impending woes, it was written also on the back" (JFB, p.209).
 - b. Ezekiel reports that the book contained information concerning lamentations, mournings, and woe. It was a message of doom! The purpose of such a tragic message was to promote repentance; if the Israelites would return to God's way, he would be able to bless them. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:30-32).
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EZEKIEL 3

A. Ezekiel 3:1-14: The Prophet is Directed to Speak to the House of Israel.

1. Verses 1-3: "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."
 - a. The "house of Israel" here is Judah. The northern kingdom (Israel) had long since been captivated by the Assyrians. Now, two groups of the people of Judah had been captured and were serving their taskmasters in Babylonia. It was to those people of Judah who were in captivity that Ezekiel was being sent.
 - b. Before he could do his assigned work, it was necessary first that he understand the message he was to present. Thus, he was instructed to eat the roll which contained God's word. In the case of the inspired prophets and preachers in the Bible, they were given the message supernaturally.
 - 1) Mark 13:11: "But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 2:9-13: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."
 - 3) Ephesians 3:1-5: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."
 - c. Although the message was filled with lamentations, mourning, and woe, since it was God's word, Ezekiel found it as sweet as honey. This is the attitude we must all have toward God's word. If we do not love, respect, and yearn for it, we will not be profited by it.
 - 1) Matthew 5:6: "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."
 - 2) Psalms 19:10: "More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."
 - 3) Proverbs 24:13: "My son, eat thou honey, because *it is* good; and the honeycomb, *which is* sweet to thy taste."
2. Verses 4-6: "And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou *art* not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, *but* to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee."
 - a. Ezekiel is told to go to the house of Israel, and deliver God's words to them. He did not even have to

compose the message, but merely give them what God told him to speak.

- b. The Lord reminds the prophet that he was not being sent to a strange people who spoke a strange language. There was no need for him to learn a new tongue. In the New Testament, when the gospel was carried to the world in general, the miraculous gift of tongues was needed by the saints in order to announce the message in the languages of the people. Cf. Acts 2:1ff.
- c. He has already been told that the Israelites will not want to hear the message he has to offer them. They had little regard for God's word because it interfered with their way of life. If Ezekiel had been sent to a strange people, he would have had a better audience. Those who are familiar with the truth seem oftentimes to be indifferent to it, while those to whom the pure word of God is new, have a great interest in it.
 - 1) Matthew 11:20-24: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."
 - 2) Acts 13:44-47: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."
3. Verses 7-9: "But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house."
 - a. Jehovah plainly stated that Ezekiel would not have a receptive audience among the Israelites; this was due to their hard heads and hard hearts. The margin renders the phrase as "stiff of forehead and hard of heart."
 - b. The Lord tells the prophet that he has made him strong enough to match their hardness. Indeed, to deal with such people the prophet would have to be as hard as flint. Preaching God's word in any age of the world requires men who are strong, resilient, and impervious to insult. Every hard word and evil deed one can imagine are directed toward faithful men of God.
 - 1) 2 Timothy 2:1-5: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge *thee* in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But

be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry” (ASV).

4. Verses 10-14: “Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place. *I heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.”
 - a. Ezekiel is reminded again that he is to take the words which he is to receive from the Lord and give them to the people of Israel, who are in captivity, regardless of whether they are inclined to hear or reject the word. His job is to give them the message; their response is their own responsibility.
 - b. He is sent first to the Israelite captives at Tel-abib. They were still rebellious. Those who are punished often have the idea that the penalty is undeserved, and that there has been a miscarriage of justice. It seems that they had not learned the lesson as yet, and needed information from the Lord to produce repentance in their hearts. Those still in Jerusalem are later addressed.
 - c. Ezekiel 3:14: "So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; **and** the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me" (ASV). The word “but” in the KJV and NKJ is rendered “and” in the ASV.

B. Ezekiel 3:15-21: The Prophet’s Work is Described as that of a Watchman.

1. Verse 15: “Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.”
 - a. “Ezekiel’s abode heretofore had not been the most suitable for his work. He therefore is guided by the spirit to Tel-abib, the chief town of the Jewish colony of captives; there he sat on the ground, ‘the throne of the miserable’ (Ezra 9:3; Lam. 1:1-3) seven days, the usual period for manifesting deep grief (Job 2:13), thus winning their confidence by sympathy in their sorrow (see Ps. 137:1)” (JFB, p.210).
 - b. Tel-abib: “Place name meaning, ‘mound of the flood’ or ‘mound of grain.’ Tel-Abib on the Chebar Canal near Nippur in Babylon was home to Ezekiel and other Exiles (Ezek. 3:15). The Babylonians may have thought it was the ruined site of the original flood” (Holman).
2. Verses 16-19: “And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”
 - a. When his seven days of mournful sympathy had passed, the Lord spoke to Ezekiel, stating that he had been made a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore, he was to hear the word which the Lord gave him, and deliver that word of warning to the Israelites.
 - b. The prophet was to tell the wicked that God’s pronouncement against them was that they shall surely die; if he did not deliver that warning, which could save the life of the wicked man, that wicked man would die in his sin, but his blood would be required at the hands of Ezekiel.
 - 1) One who is ignorantly living in sin cannot escape the penalty of sin because of his ignorance. In some cases, ignorance may be blissful, but not so in matters where God’s word has been transgressed.

- a) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - b) Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
- 2) Those who know the truth are obligated to spread the truth. To withhold the saving truth of the gospel from the lost, is to allow them to die in their sins and be lost eternally; one who could have told them of their tragic situation, but did not do so, must partake of the evil of his own dereliction of duty.
- c. On the other hand, if Ezekiel issues the warning of the lost condition of the wicked, and the wicked man does not take heed, that lawless man will die in his sin, but the prophet will have delivered his own soul.
 - 1) It is in the individual's own best personal interest to help others to see the truth. Unless we tell others the truth, we are partly responsible for their continuing in their lost condition. To tell them the truth to the saving of their souls is to remove responsibility from our own shoulders.
 - 2) Those preachers, elders, teachers, and others who know God's word, but who will not teach it in its purity, are causing souls to die lost that might otherwise be saved; and in their unfaithfulness they are condemning their own souls.
 - d. The statements of this passage are part of the Old Testament law, but the principle is still in effect in the New Testament age. Notice the following plain statements:
 - 1) Acts 18:6: "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."
 - 2) Acts 20:20-21,26-27: "*And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.... Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
 - 3) It is a mark of friendship to wake up a family at midnight to warn them that their house is on fire. Paul presented the truth to Felix. He did not do it to make the governor tremble, but to get him to obey the gospel! "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). Felix can blame only himself for remaining in sin.
3. Verses 20-21: "Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."
- a. The same point is made in reference to a righteous man that was previously made with regards to a wicked man. Ezekiel is ordered to warn the righteous man against turning away from his righteous conduct and committing iniquity (lawlessness). If the prophet fails to give this warning, and the man turns away into sin, that former righteous man will die in his sin (and suffer the prescribed penalty), but God will hold the prophet accountable. The Lord will not remember the righteous conduct of the man, which he did prior to his falling away.
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- b. However, if Ezekiel warns the righteous man, and that man heeds the warning, that man will be kept free from sin, will die in righteousness, and the prophet will have delivered his own soul. This is not to say that anyone can save himself; it is to say that we can remain faithful only if we live up to the obligations the Lord places upon us.
 - 1) James 3:1: "Be not many *of you* teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment" (ASV).
 - 2) Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
- c. In what sense does the Lord lay a stumblingblock before a righteous man? First, we know that God does not tempt any man to commit sin (Jas. 1:13). A man is tempted when he permits his own lusts to lead him astray (Jas. 1:14-15). However, in order to develop spiritual strength, the Lord allows us to have persecutions, hardships, and other trials (Heb. 12).
 - 1) Jeremiah 6:21: "Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish."
 - 2) 1 Peter 2:7-8: "Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."
 - 3) Also, when a man is determined on going his own way, God does not coerce him to do right. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

C. Ezekiel 3:22-27: The Prophet is Sent to the Plain.

1. Verses 22-23: "And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face."
 - a. The Lord directed the prophet to proceed into the plain. Apparently, Ezekiel needed further motivation. He went into the plain, where he saw another manifestation of God's glory, such as he had seen previously by the river of Chebar (ch. 1).
 - b. Compare: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me" (Isa. 6:1-8).
 - c. The prophet was again moved to fall on his face before this marvelous display of the glory of God. He was being readied for the great task that lay before him.
 2. Verses 24-27: "Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house. But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon
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thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they *are* a rebellious house. But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they *are* a rebellious house."

- a. The spirit of God entered in the prophet, and caused him to stand upon his feet. He was now told to go and shut himself up in his own house. The time for his preaching would be determined by the Lord; in the meantime, he was to stay home and keep silent.
 - b. Ezekiel is told that the time would come when the people would bind him, and not permit him to speak. Would this be done literally? Or does it mean that he might just as well be bound and gagged for all the good his preaching would do Israel?
 - c. Perhaps the Lord is illustrating to the prophet the fact that his words would not be received by the people, and that, in effect, the Lord would have made him mute, in the sense that his message would go unheeded.
 - d. It may be that God is simply telling him that the time for preaching to Israel had not yet come; that he was to tell him when to speak.
 - e. "This symbolic lesson was to impress upon Ezekiel and the people the need to hear **only** the Lord and to speak **all** and **only** what the Lord has spoken" (Stearnsman, p.8).
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EZEKIEL 4

A. Ezekiel 4:1-3: The Sign of the Tile.

1. Verse 1: "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, *even* Jerusalem."
 - a. God here instructed the prophet to take a tile ("clay tablet"—NKJ) and inscribe on it a likeness of the city of Jerusalem. The brick would be only sun-dried to the point that it would be soft enough to write on, but hard enough to maintain its shape.
 - b. Clarke quotes an ancient writer who describes the size of primitive bricks: "'Let the bricks be two feet long, one foot broad, and four inches thick'....On such a surface as this the whole siege might be easily portrayed. There are some *brick-bats* before me which were brought from the ruins of ancient Babylon, kneaded together and baked in the sun; one has been more than four inches thick, and on one side it is deeply impressed with characters; pressed on one side with Persepolitan characters. These have been for inside or ornamental work; to such bricks the prophet most probably alludes" (p.433).
2. Verse 2: "And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set *battering* rams against it round about."
 - a. On the brick, Ezekiel was to portray the scene of a siege mounted against Jerusalem. The "fort" was a siege wall (or mound or watchtower); this would offer protection to the assaulting forces, and could enable them to use archers against the defenders.
 - b. He was to place representations of the camp of the attacking army around the city. Battering rams were to be depicted. These implements of war were so-constructed as to enable the invaders to batter down the gates or walls of a city. A long beam, with the metal likeness of a ram's head fitted on the end, and suspended by chains or ropes from a stand, was used to strike repeatedly against a gate or wall until it was broken down. Clarke reports that this was the earliest record of such a device being used.
 - c. The point in this illustrated message was to show the captives that their beloved city was soon to be destroyed. They would be joined in captivity by their brethren back home who had till now been able to remain in the land. The present captives could expect no help from their brethren; their brethren needed help themselves.
3. Verse 3: "Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it *for* a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This *shall be* a sign to the house of Israel."
 - a. Ezekiel is next told to take a common metal pan, a flat vessel suspended above a fire or placed in an oven, and thus used in cooking, and wedge it into the ground in a vertical position.
 - b. This pan was to symbolize a wall of separation between the prophet and the city. It would illustrate that he, as God's spokesman, would be speaking against Jerusalem.
 - c. The sins of the Israelites had come to fruition; they were now to reap the evil spiritual crop they had been sowing for many years. God was no longer for them, but against them.
4. Many times in the Scriptures, God chose to illustrate a spiritual truth by means of some demonstration like those of this passage. Educators and others have learned that we can remember material much better if we both see and hear the information, than if we hear only. The Lord recognized the value of this method of teaching.

B. Ezekiel 4:4-8: The Sign of Ezekiel Lying on his Side.

1. Verses 4-6: "Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: *according* to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee
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the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.”

- a. The prophet is instructed to lie on his left side for three hundred and ninety days. In the next verse, he will be told to lie on his right side for forty days. This was “another symbolical act, performed at the same time as the former, in vision, not in external action, wherein it would have been only puerile: narrated as a thing ideally done, it would make a vivid impression. The second action is supplementary to the first, to bring out more fully the same prophetic idea” (JFB, p.213).
- b. Did the prophet lie on his left side for a literal period of 390 days? And on his right side 40 literal days? The 430 days would be well over a year. In the chapters which follow, he is kept busy; and in chapter 8:1, the time is placed at the 6th year, sixth month, the fifth day of the month. The first vision is placed at the fifth year, fourth month, the fifth day of the month (fourteen months).
 - 1) That amounts to about 430 days. It is unclear, however, whether he spent the entire period of time literally lying on his side. Jamieson thought the time factor was expressed as an idea, not in literal fulfillment.
 - 2) But Clarke thought that the time was literally spent by the prophet lying down. “It appears that all that is mentioned here and in the following verses was done, not in idea, but in fact. The prophet lay down on his left side upon a couch to which he was chained, ver. 5, for three hundred and ninety days; and afterwards he lay in the same manner upon his right side, for forty days. And thus was signified the state of the Jews, and the punishment that was coming upon them” (p.433). Compare: "But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them" (Ezek. 3:15).
 - 3) “We find the explanation of the attitude in Ezek 16:46. Samaria was on the ‘left hand,’ i.e. to the north, as a man looked to the east. So the same word *yamin* is both ‘the south’ (1 Sam 23:19,24; Ps 84:12) and ‘the right hand.’ Here, accordingly, the ‘house of Israel’ is taken in its specific sense, as the northern kingdom as distinguished from the ‘house of Judah’ in ver. 6. Thou shalt bear their iniquity; i.e., as in all similar passages (Ex 28:43; Lev 5:17; 7:18; Num 18:1, et al.), the punishment of their iniquity. The words so taken will help us to understand the numerical symbolism of the words that followed. The prophet was by this act to identify himself with both divisions of the nation, by representing in this strange form at once the severity and the limits of their punishment. I adopt, without any hesitation, the view that we have here the record of a fact, and not of a vision narrated. The object of the act was to startle men and make them wonder. As week after week went on this, *exceptis excipiendis*, was to be Ezekiel's permanent attitude, as of one crushed to the very ground, prostrate under the burden thus laid upon him, as impersonating his people” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
- c. The tabernacle, and later the temple, was positioned so that the only entrance faced the east. The sun, of course, rises from the east. The prophet, facing the east in the land of Canaan, would have the ten tribes (Israel) on his left and the two tribes (Judah) on his right.
- d. Lying on his left side was meant to symbolize God’s judgment against the iniquity practiced by the Northern Kingdom, and lying on his right side was intended to represent the penalty to be sent upon Judah (the Southern Kingdom). The ten tribes were in rebellion throughout their history as a separate nation; Judah’s rebellion was of shorter duration. Israel had no godly king; Judah had several.
- e. Each day represented a year. Israel’s punishment is put at 390 years; Judah’s at 40 years. “The 390 years of punishment appointed for Israel, and forty for Judah, cannot refer to the siege of Jerusalem. That siege is referred to (vv. 1-3), not in a sense restricted to the literal siege, but comprehending the *whole* train of punishment to be inflicted for their sin; therefore we read here merely of its sore

pressure, not of its result. The sum of 390 and 40 years is 430—a period famous in the history of the covenant people, being that of their sojourn in Egypt...” (JFB, p.213).

- 1) Exodus 12:40-41: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, *was* four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."
 - 2) Galatians 3:17: "And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."
- f. Compare: "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise" (Num. 14:34). The prophet was to lie down for a total period amounting to 430 days, which the text says represents 430 years; and the 430 years are symbolic of a period of punishment for the people of Israel. When did this occur? The punishment was future to the time of Ezekiel. The fulfillment is very difficult, if not impossible, to interpret and fit into a specific period of time. The meaning might be found in taking the 430 years as a general reference to a lengthy but indefinite period of trouble in Israel's future.
- 1) From the time they were captivated (Israel in 721 B.C. by the Assyrians; Judah in 606-536 B.C. by the Babylonians), through most of their time after they returned to Palestine, they were under the control of the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, and the Roman Empire.
 - 2) On their return to the land, they endured the opposition and persecution of the Samaritans (see Ezra and Nehemiah). Later, after the Grecian Empire was split into four parts at the death of Alexander the Great, the Israelites were persecuted and dominated by the Syrians. From 164 to 63 B.C., they enjoyed a century of freedom. From 63 B.C., they were under the heel of Rome. Finally, in 70 A.D., Jerusalem was taken, the temple was destroyed, and the people either killed, enslaved, or deported.
 - 3) "The picturing of the future under the image of the past, wherein the meaning was far from lying on the surface, was intended to arouse to a less superficial mode of thinking, just as the partial veiling of truth in Jesus' parables was designed to stimulate enquiry; also, to remind men that God's dealings in the past are a key to the future, for he moves on the same everlasting principles, the forms alone being transitory" (JFB, p.214).
 - 4) If the 430 years is dated from the time of this prophecy (593 B.C.), we would be brought to the year 163 B.C., the time when Israel under the Maccabees won their independence from the Syrians (164 B.C.). This seems the best interpretation.
2. Verses 7-8: "Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm *shall be* uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it. And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege."
- a. During the time when he was lying on his side, Ezekiel was to set his face toward the siege of Jerusalem. His arm was to be uncovered, giving him freedom to prophesy against the people of the city. A prophet may have used his arm during the delivery of an oral prophecy, as some preachers do in their presentations.
 - b. While he was lying on one or the other side, he would be bound to prevent unnecessary movement. This seems to indicate that the 430 days was literally spent lying down, as verses 4-7 describe. Compare: "But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them" (Ezek. 3:25). However, his lying down for 430 days may have been done only in the visions. The results would be the same—his prophecy would be one part of lying on his side for the time indicated.
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C. Ezekiel 4:9-17: The Sign of the Food.

1. Verses 9-12: “Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, *according* to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. And thy meat which thou shalt eat *shall be* by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. And thou shalt eat it *as* barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight.”
 - a. The food items listed were to be the prophet’s food during the ordeal of 390 days on his left side. These items would be placed in the same vessel, ground up together, and baked into bread. There would not be enough of one type to make the bread. The fitches of verse nine is rendered “spelt” in the margin and in the NKJ and ASV. Spelt is the name of an ancient species of wheat, which did not easily come free from the chaff (Webster).
 - b. “In Ezekiel 4:9-17, the prophet is presented with a warning concerning the coming famine, which would consume the city of Jerusalem. Indeed, a careful study of this context reveals that two thoughts are to be distinguished. First, there is the issue of the famine itself (v..9-11,16-17). Second, there is the issue of the ritual cleanness commands were given to Ezekiel regarding his own personal diet. Such a diet was to be symbolic in regard to the coming famine as well as pertaining to Judah’s eating of ritually impure food” (Meadows, MSOP, pp.92f).
 - c. The prophet was limited to one meal per day, with the total weight being no more than twenty shekels [about 9 ounces] daily. His daily intake of water was restricted to one-sixth hin [about two pints]. Since his diet was restricted during the period of 430 days, it may be the case that the action was literal—that he actually lay on his side for the period of 430 days.
 - d. The food was to be prepared in the form of a barley cake, which was to be cooked on a fire fueled by human refuse.
 2. Verses 13-17: “And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.”
 - a. Ezekiel was repulsed at the idea of eating food which had been cooked over such a fire. He stated to the Lord that from his youth he had kept himself free from eating anything that had died of itself, or been killed by some wild beast, or any other kind of flesh prohibited by the law. The Lord gave him the right to use cow dung for fuel.
 - b. God revealed to the prophet that the people of Jerusalem would face a great famine during the coming siege, requiring them to carefully measure their food and water. They would be dismayed and shocked at the harshness of their condition.
 - c. The purpose of this extremity was to be construed as punishment from God upon their unfaithfulness. The many warnings they were given in the written law and others delivered to them by the prophets had gone unheeded; it was now time for them to reap what they had sown. "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" (Gal. 6:7-8).
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EZEKIEL 5

A. Ezekiel 5:1-4: The Prophet is Told to Cut his Hair and Beard.

1. Verses 1-2: "And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause *it* to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the *hair*. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, *and* smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them."
 - a. This is the fourth symbolic act the prophet is directed to do, each of which has a meaning for the people of Israel. The first was given in 4:1-3 [the brick]; the second in 4:4-8 [lying on his side]; the third in 4:9-17 [the food and drink].
 - b. Here Ezekiel is told to cut off his hair and beard, which was a token of deep mourning.
 - 1) Job 1:20: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped."
 - 2) Isaiah 7:20: "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, *namely*, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard."
 - 3) Jeremiah 41:5: "That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, *even* fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring *them* to the house of the LORD."
 - c. "In verse 1, although the shaving of the head was forbidden in the Torah (cf. Lev. 19:27; 21:5), the act was regarded, in certain examples, as a sign of lamentation (cf. Isa. 3:24; 22:12). In addition, such shaving was forbidden to a priest (like Ezekiel) as the hair of the priest served to mark his sanctification to the Lord (Lev. 21:5; 19:27). After shaving his head and face, Ezekiel was to divide his shorn hair by weight with balances" (Meadows, MSOP, p.94).
 - 1) Leviticus 19:27: "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard."
 - 2) Leviticus 21:5: "They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh."
 - 3) Isaiah 3:24: "And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty."
 - 4) Isaiah 22:12: "And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth."
 - d. A third part of his shorn-off hair and beard was to be burned in the midst of the city when it falls to the siege. The prophet is to burn the hair in the city as depicted on the brick (4:1-3), when the city is captured in his demonstration. Another third part of the hair he is to smite with a knife. The final third part was to be scattered in the wind. The point of this demonstration is to depict graphically the fate of the people in the actual city of Jerusalem. A third of them will perish in the fire [plus famine, disease] when the city burns; a third part will be slain with the sword; a third part of them will be scattered among the pagan world. Verse twelve gives an explanatory note: "A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them" (5:12).
2. Verses 3-4: "Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. Then take of them

again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; *for* thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.”

- a. “In verse 3, Ezekiel was commanded to bind some of the hair in the hem of his garment. These hairs presumably from those that had been scattered, seem to represent a saved remnant which the prophet would keep close to him in his garment. In essence, a remnant of those carried off to exile would survive (cf. Ezek. 6:6-8; 9:8; 11:13)” (Meadows, MSOP, p.94).
- b. The prophet is further instructed to take some more of these hairs from the hem of his garment and throw them into the fire. The remainder would be thus reduced further in number, meaning that the ultimate survivors to come through this great ordeal would be small indeed.
- c. We are reminded in this demonstration of the small number of people of the world’s population who will be saved in heaven, compared to the great number of the lost. In Noah’s day, only eight righteous people could be found. During the time of Elijah, only seven thousand in the Northern Kingdom had not bowed their knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18).
 - 1) Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
 - 2) Luke 13:23-24: "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

B. Ezekiel 5:5-11: The Doom of Jerusalem Foretold.

1. Verses 5-6: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; This *is* Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries *that are* round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that *are* round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.”
 - a. From God’s point of view, Jerusalem is regarded as the center of earthly society. Israel was his people, and Jerusalem was the heart of the nation of Israel. His people were to be a radiating center from which the knowledge of God should spread. If the Israelites had lived up to their obligations and been the influence God intended, the Gentile nations would have been influenced toward a life of godliness. But instead of their influencing the heathen world toward godliness, the heathen world influenced Israel toward a life of ungodliness.
 - b. The people of Israel had rejected God’s judgments and statutes; there could be no acceptable reason to excuse their disobedience. One who knows the law and violates its standards are considered more culpable than those who offend out of ignorance of the law. "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48).
 - c. The Gentile nations degraded themselves more and more, and although they had no acceptable excuse for their actions, yet they were less blameworthy than Israel.
 - 1) Romans 3:1-2: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."
 - 2) Acts 7:51-53: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*."

- d. The Corinthians condoned the sinful conduct of one of their members who had “his father’s wife.” Paul strongly censured them for this spiritual crime, and said that they had exceeded the Gentiles in this. "It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife" (1 Cor. 5:1).
2. Verses 7-10: “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that *are* round about you, *and* have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that *are* round about you; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, *am* against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.”
- a. Jeremiah 2:10-11: "For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit." This passage enlightens us on the present text.
- 1) The heathen nations had remained loyal to their false gods. Israel, on the other hand, had been privileged to know and serve the one true God, but had turned their backs upon him!
 - 2) Keil offers a differing view: “The heathen had laws which were opposed to those of God, but also such as were rooted in the law of God written upon their hearts [?]. Obedience to the latter was good and praiseworthy; to the former, wicked and objectionable. Israel, which hated the law of God, followed the wicked and sinful laws of the heathen, and neglected to observe their *good* laws” (Keil, Vol. I, p.89).
- b. In verse nine, the Lord promises to do among the Israelites what he had done before, and which he would not again do; this extreme penalty was owing to their abominations. That which he vowed to allow was cannibalism, in which fathers would eat their sons, and sons would eat their fathers.
- 1) Leviticus 26:29: "And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 28:53: "And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee."
 - 3) 2 Kings 25:1-3: "And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it: and they built forts against it round about. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. And on the ninth *day* of the *fourth* month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land."
 - 4) The following is a report on an event that occurred during the siege of Samaria: "And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was *sold* for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver. And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and
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the people looked, and, behold, *he had* sackcloth within upon his flesh" (2 Kings 6:24-30).

3. Verse 11: "Wherefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish *thee*; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity."
 - a. The people had so defiled his sanctuary (the temple, specifically the Most Holy Place), with the many detestable idols and corrupt services, plus all the other abominations they had invented, that God vows he will not diminish any of the intended punishment.
 - b. God further states that his eye will not spare the guilty, and he will have pity on no one. The God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament. God is the God of love, but he is also the God of justice. He is the God of holiness. His infinite sense of justice protects his holiness; and his love tempers his justice.
 - 1) Hebrews 2:1-3: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*."
 - 2) Hebrews 10:29-31: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:28-29: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire."

C. Ezekiel 5:12-17: The Punishment Jerusalem will Receive.

1. Verse 12: "A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them."
 - a. This gives an additional explanation to the statements in verse two. A third part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would perish by pestilence and famine, and be consumed; verse two speaks of their being consumed in the fire.
 - b. A third part of them would perish in the fighting; and the other third would be scattered, being taken as captives into foreign lands.
 2. Verses 13-14: "Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it* in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them. Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that *are* round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by."
 - a. When God shall have accomplished the punishment of his people as herein described, he speaks of his anger being cooled. This does not imply that God has a violent temper or that he loses his control when his subjects rebel. Rather, God's wrath is more akin to judicial wrath; it is applied in measured strokes.
 - b. The fate of Jerusalem and its rebellious population would become an object lesson for the heathen nations—and for future generations of Israelites and Christians.
 3. Verses 15-17: "So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that *are* round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious
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rebukes. I the LORD have spoken *it*. When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for *their* destruction, *and* which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread: So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken *it*."

- a. The surviving Israelites would be scorned and reviled by the heathen nations who would see them cast out of their own land.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 28:37: "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee."
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 7:20: "Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it *to be* a proverb and a byword among all nations."
 - 3) Psalms 44:14: "Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people."
 - 4) Cf. Lamentations 1:12: "*Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger."
 - b. The fate of these people would serve as a divine warning for all future generations who take the word of God lightly, thinking it can be scorned, ignored, or otherwise disobeyed with impunity.
 - c. God promises to send to the Israelites a many-faceted punishment:
 - 1) Famine to starve them.
 - 2) Evil beasts (especially of the two-legged variety) to consume them.
 - 3) Pestilence to afflict them.
 - 4) Blood (or violence) to destroy them.
 - 5) The sword to slay them.
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EZEKIEL 6

A. Ezekiel 6:1-10: Ezekiel is Told to Prophesy Against the Mountains of Israel.

1. Verses 1-2: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them."
 - a. Ezekiel was in captivity in Babylonia, with many of his fellow-Israelites. The Chaldeans had taken many of them from their native land during the two preceding invasions of Jerusalem. The third of the three attacks launched by the Babylonians against Jerusalem was approaching. It was Ezekiel's job to predict these troubles and to set forth the reasons for them.
 - b. In this vision, the prophet is told to set his face toward the mountains of Israel, and deliver an oracle against them. The mountains are personified; they are made to represent the people of Israel.
 - c. "The *mountains* are addressed by personification; implying that the Israelites themselves are incurable, and unworthy of any more appeals; so the prophet sent to Jeroboam did not deign to address the king, but addressed the altar (1 Ki. 13:2). The mountains are specified, as being the scene of Jewish idolatries on 'the high places' (v.3)" (JFB, p.219).
2. Verses 3-4: "And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols."
 - a. The main problem in Israel was idolatry. Their ancestors had been exposed to idols during their long sojourn in Egypt. Not long after leaving the land of their bondage, they allowed themselves to be caught up in an idolatrous episode at Sinai (Ex. 32). Even Aaron played a leading role in this foolish display of unbelief. They were to be plagued with idolatry until they were finally cured by captivity in Babylon. Knowing the future, God sought to prevent or diminish idolatry by issuing two directives in the Decalogue:
 - 1) Exodus 20:1-3: "And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
 - 2) Exodus 20:4-6: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."
 - b. The spiritual condition of Israel declined until this sad state developed, which resulted in the coming of the Babylonians: "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave *them* all into his hand" (2 Chron. 36:14-17).
 - c. Through the years, God sent prophets to warn them against rebellion, but these warnings were mostly

- ignored. Even after seeing the Assyrians carry off the Northern Kingdom, and having witnessed two invasions by the Babylonians of Jerusalem, in which many of their citizens were slain or enslaved, they continued to disregard the warnings. At the time, Jeremiah was working diligently in Jerusalem to get them to repent, and Ezekiel was doing a similar work among the captives. It was discouraging to the prophets to see God's word shunned; the rebellion of modern man is discouraging to us now.
- d. Places of idolatry were located on mountains and hills, in valleys, and by streams. The prophetic word delivered here through Ezekiel personified these locations, and carried the promise from God that he would leave their altars desolate, break down their images, and cast down to the ground the dead bodies of those who worshiped the idols.
3. Verses 5-7: "And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD."
- a. "The ignominy of the destruction is heightened by the bones of the slain idolaters being scattered round about the idol altars. In order that the idolatry may be entirely rooted out, the cities throughout the whole land, and all the high places, are to be devastated..." (Keil, Vol. I, p.95).
- b. When the Lord got finished with the destruction and desolation he would bring upon Israel by the hand of the Babylonians, the personified places of idolatry would know that Jehovah is God; there would be no mistaking this message! The point is, of course, that the survivors would for all time remember the disaster of idolatry. They would pass on to the succeeding generations this lesson. While some individuals may have fallen into idolatry in the future, the nation as a whole learned the lesson and did not again give itself over to this spiritual crime.
- c. Jeremiah 8:1-2: "At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth." The pagans would break into tombs in search of treasures that had been buried with the rich. Unwittingly, they would fulfill the prediction.
4. Verses 8-10: "Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have *some* that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I *am* the LORD, *and that* I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them."
- a. Ezekiel 6:8-14: "Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have *some* who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries. Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I *am* the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them" (NKJ).
- b. The Bible shows that only a remnant of the world's population escaped death in the flood; only a small number remained untainted by Baal worship during the time of Elijah; only a remnant of the Jews would obey the gospel (Rom. 11); only a minority of mankind will be saved eternally. Here, we are
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told that only a fragment of the nation would escape the Babylonian captivity. Many would perish in the famine and fighting.

- c. The survivors of that experience would know that God meant what he said when he vowed to bring destruction upon his unbelieving people! At that point, they would recognize their rebellion; it would not be necessary for Gentiles to convince them of their sin; they would loathe themselves for their great error. "And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity" (Lev. 26:39-41).

B. Ezekiel 6:11-14: The Effects of God's Wrath Upon the Remnant.

1. Verses 11-12: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them."
 - a. The basic methods by which the people of Israel would be slain are listed here. Some would be killed by the sword, others would die in the famine, and pestilence would exterminate others.
 - b. God's hand would be behind all of this; the events would appear to an observer to be entirely natural; the Babylonians would not perceive that they were instruments in a divine punishment. "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces *that are* not theirs" (Hab. 1:6). [Habakkuk did his work about 625 B.C.].
 - c. The prophet is told to smite with his hand and stamp with his foot as a demonstration of God's displeasure with his people and his own dismay. "Show the utmost marks of thy astonishment and indignation, and dread of the evils that are coming upon them. Some have contended for the propriety of clapping and stamping in public worship from these words! It is scarcely a breach of charity to think that such persons are themselves incapable either of attending on or conducting the worship of God....Such extravagant acts are no part of God's worship" (Clarke, p.438).
2. Verses 13-14: "Then shall ye know that I *am* the LORD, when their slain *men* shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols. So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. When it was too late to avoid the disaster, the people would finally see the error of their way; then they would perceive the truthfulness of the preaching of the prophets and the declarations of God's written word. The same sorrowful end awaits those of our day who scorn God's word! "...we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10-12).
 - b. When they saw the large numbers of the slain who had worshipped idols, scattered around the objects of their devotion, then they would see their error! "What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it *is* laid over with gold and silver, and *there is* no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:18-20).
 - c. When the Lord finished with the punishment of his people, their land would be more desolate than the wilderness of Diblath, the territory south and east of the Dead Sea. Moses described part of this

bleak area in Deuteronomy 8:15: "Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, *wherein were* fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where *there was* no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint."

EZEKIEL 7

A. Ezekiel 7:1-15: The Time for Israel's Punishment Was at Hand.

1. Verses 1-4: "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. Now *is* the end *come* upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. The devastation foreseen by Ezekiel would affect the entire land of Israel, not just a portion. It would come upon the "four corners" of the land. The *four corners of the earth* is a reference to all the earth, in each direction. The Bible teaches that the earth is round (cf. Isa. 40:22); passages such as these do not assert the earth is a cube. The "four corners" is a figure of speech which is used to include the whole earth.
 - 1) Isaiah 11:12: "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."
 - 2) Matthew 24:31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."
 - b. The time was at hand in which God would bring the full punishment of his wrath upon the land of Israel. Of course, the penalty was brought to bear upon the people; the land would suffer, but the real sentence would be upon the inhabitants. It would affect them all. They would be unable to hide.
 - c. The abominations they had committed were the cause of this punishment. They would deserve what he sent upon them. It would be plain for all to see that God is the Lord. 2. Verses 5-9: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; An evil, an only evil, behold, is come. An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come. The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble *is* near, and not the sounding again of the mountains. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations *that* are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD that smiteth."
 - a. Ezekiel 7:5-9 "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'A disaster, a singular disaster; Behold, it has come! An end has come, The end has come; It has dawned for you; Behold, it has come! Doom has come to you, you who dwell in the land; The time has come, A day of trouble *is* near, And not of rejoicing in the mountains. Now upon you I will soon pour out My fury, And spend My anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, And I will repay you for all your abominations. 'My eye will not spare, Nor will I have pity; I will repay you according to your ways, And your abominations will be in your midst. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD who strikes'" (NKJ).
 - b. The average Israelite would have great difficulty accepting the idea that Jerusalem was to be burned and the temple destroyed. That magnificent edifice, so richly endowed, erected four centuries earlier by Solomon, was to be utterly razed! How difficult would it be for us to conceive of the Statue of Liberty, the Washington Monument, the White House, the Pentagon, the Capitol building, or the Empire State Building being completely flattened? Is it hard for you to think of your house being torn down? The twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were demolished by terrorists on September 11, 2001.
 - c. The temple had been erected as the proper place where God could be worshiped. When the people had
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polluted it so that it could not serve that primary purpose, the Lord had no reason to allow it to remain. The Israelites of that generation did not value that national treasure until it was taken from them, and they were removed from the land of their birth. It would not be a time of rejoicing! The high places had been locations of sinful indulgence and mirth; there would be no more of that.

- d. Despite the harshness of the consequences, God would not show pity toward them. They had rebelled against him, and must suffer the effect their sinful conduct demanded. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).
3. Verses 10-13: "Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded. Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them *shall remain*, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither *shall there be* wailing for them. The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof. For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision *is* touching the whole multitude thereof, *which* shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life."
 - a. Ezekiel 7:10-13: "'Behold, the day! Behold, it has come! Doom has gone out; The rod has blossomed, Pride has budded. Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness; None of them *shall remain*, None of their multitude, None of them; Nor *shall there be* wailing for them. The time has come, The day draws near. 'Let not the buyer rejoice, Nor the seller mourn, For wrath *is* on their whole multitude. For the seller shall not return to what has been sold, Though he may still be alive; For the vision concerns the whole multitude, And it shall not turn back; No one will strengthen himself who lives in iniquity" (NKJ).
 - b. "After hundreds of years of rebellion and the countless warnings of all of the prophets, the day of God's wrath had arrived. The havoc resulting from the Chaldeans would effectively nullify commercial transactions. Buyers should not rejoice, nor sellers mourn" (Gossett, MSOP, p.108).
 - c. The "rod" the Lord would use as an implement of punishment was Nebuchadnezzar. Through him God would wreak vengeance upon his rebellious nation.
 - 1) Isaiah 10:5: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation."
 - 2) Jeremiah 51:20: "Thou *art* my battle ax *and* weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms."
 - d. The time was at hand for them to be recompensed for their sins. The "rod" had blossomed; it was now ready to be used. The pride of the Babylonians had budded; it would bring evil upon Israel. The Chaldeans would use their power to do great violence to them.
 - e. The punishment to be brought to bear upon Israel would affect all of them; none of their multitude would escape; and there would be no one who would mourn for the afflictions they would suffer. The Israelites have always been known for their business acuity; but the buyer would not rejoice over a good purchase, and the seller would have no occasion to mourn because of a financial loss.
 - f. Regarding verse thirteen, Clarke says: "In the sale of all heritages among the Jews, it was always understood that the heritage must return to the family on the *year of jubilee*, which was every *fiftieth* year; but in this case the seller should not return to possess it, as it was not likely that he should be alive when the next jubilee should come; and if he were even to live till that time, he could not possess it, as he would then be in captivity. And the reason is particularly given; *for the vision*—the prophetic declaration of a seventy years' captivity, regards the whole multitude of the people; and it shall not return, i.e., it will be found to be strictly true, without any abatement" (p.440).
 - g. Warnings such as these have been issued in the New Testament for men living in this dispensation. Yet few take heed.
 - 1) Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men

every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

- 2) 2 Peter 3:3-4: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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 the creation."
 - 3) 2 Peter 3:9-10: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
4. Verses 14-15: " They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof. The sword *is* without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that *is* in the field shall die with the sword; and he that *is* in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him."
- a. When God brings the Chaldeans against Jerusalem, the men of Israel will be unable to mount any significant resistance against the invaders. Although the trumpet is blown, none of them will make ready for battle. Why? Because God's wrath is against Israel. Regardless of their military might, they would be unable to resist; it would be as though no one responded to the call to battle.
 - b. They would be unable to resist the Chaldeans by military strength. But if they fled into Jerusalem, to find protection, there they would encounter famine and pestilence. They could die in battle, or starve to death, or die by contracting some awful disease. "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him" (Amos 5:19).

B. Ezekiel 7:16-22: Punishment and Loss.

1. Verses 16-19: "But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak *as* water. They shall also gird *themselves* with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame *shall be* upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity."
 - a. Ezekiel 7:16-19: "Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains Like doves of the valleys, All of them mourning, Each for his iniquity. Every hand will be feeble, And every knee will be *as* weak *as* water. They will also be girded with sackcloth; Horror will cover them; Shame *will be* on every face, Baldness on all their heads. They will throw their silver into the streets, And their gold will be like refuse; Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them In the day of the wrath of the LORD; They will not satisfy their souls, Nor fill their stomachs, Because it became their stumbling block of iniquity" (NKJ).
 - b. Those who escape the sword, famine, and pestilence, and flee to the mountains, will still retain their iniquity; just because God allows them to avoid death does not mean that he has forgiven their sins. As birds were wont to flee into the mountains to evade the bird-hunters, so the escaping Israelites would be as fugitives.
 - c. Even though they escape, they will be feeble and weak; they will put on sackcloth on account of the great distress into which the nation has fallen; they will be covered with horror; shame will be upon them all. One sign of mourning evidenced by ancient people was shaving the head.
- 1) Isaiah 3:24: "And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead

of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty."

- 2) Jeremiah 48:37: "For every head *shall be* bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands *shall be* cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth."
 - 3) Micah 1:16: "Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee."
- d. They might as well throw away their silver and gold, for all the good it would do them. Before this time, they might have been able to pay tribute to an invader to get him to leave them alone; no bribe would suffice now. Their money could not protect them now. It would not be able to fill their stomachs or give them any satisfaction. Their love of money lay at the heart of their rebellion against God; it became a stumblingblock.
- 1) 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
 - 2) James 5:1-6: "Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you."
2. Verses 20-22: "As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations *and* of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them. And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it. My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret *place*: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it."
- a. "Their beautiful temple was their highest ornament, and God made it majestic by his presence. But they have even taken its riches to make their idols, which they have brought into the very courts of the Lord's house; and therefore God hath set it—the temple, from him—given it up to pillage" (Clarke, p.440).
 - b. They had polluted the temple, making it impossible for God to meet with them there in the various services conducted on those once-holy premises, especially during the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). It was made useless for the holy purpose God intended; it was no longer his house, but theirs. The same thing happened to their descendants in the first century. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:37-38).
 - c. The Most Holy Place, into which only the high priest could enter, and that only on the Day of Atonement, would be desecrated by the presence of pagans. A scene that only the high priest could see, would be invaded by the Chaldeans, who would steal the precious items located there.

C. Ezekiel 7:23-27: Mischief and Destruction.

1. Verses 23-25: "Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence. Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled. Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and *there shall be none.*"
 - a. The Israelites had filled their land with bloody crimes, crimes which were capital in nature, which

- deserved the death penalty. They had acted criminally, so the penalty of criminals would be brought upon them. Criminals are bound in chains, so they cannot escape punishment; so these people would be bound. "It was customary to lead away captives in a row, with a chain passed from the neck of one to the other" (JFB, p.223).
- b. God would bring the worst of the heathen (Gentiles—NKJ) upon them as punishment. Those pagans would possess their houses; their precious possessions and wealth would be taken by these wicked invaders.
 - c. The pomp engaged in by those of position and wealth would cease; the high places where they paid homage to idols would be defiled; the holy places in the temple would be desecrated; destruction would descend upon them; no peace could be found.
2. Verses 26-27: "Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
- a. One disaster would follow on the heels of a preceding disaster. One frightful rumor would replace a preceding frightful rumor. There would be no good news.
 - b. They would seek in vain for information from a prophet, but none would be given. It was too late for that. When Saul's sinful conduct finally caught up with him, he sought guidance from any source, even from the witch of Endor. The only news given him was that he and his sons would be dead the next day. "Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, *even* to David: Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 28:16-19).
 - c. They would be unable to obtain guidance from the priests, who were supposed to know and be able to teach the Law. This statement has direct bearing on what the enemies of Jeremiah were saying at the time: "Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words" (Jer. 18:18). Their wicked words would be brought to nought.
 - d. No word of wisdom would be forthcoming from the old people (the elders), who ordinarily are able to impart sound counsel. Even the aged wise men would be corrupted by sin, and be in the same trouble. They could not even help themselves.
 - e. The king would be in mourning, so he could offer no help. "And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was *sold* for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver. And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, *he had* sackcloth within
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upon his flesh" (2 Kings 6:24-30).

- f. The princes would be in the same state of desolation as the ordinary people. The ordinary people would have nothing but trouble on their hands.
 - g. The punishment being brought upon them in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem was in keeping with the evil of which the people were guilty. Few indeed were innocent; many were guilty. God was not overly severe in the penalty. They were given what they deserved.
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EZEKIEL 8

A. Ezekiel 8:1-6: The First Abomination the Prophet sees at Jerusalem.

1. Verses 1-4: "And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *as* I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where *was* the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel *was* there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain."
 - a. A new segment of Ezekiel's visions is given in chapters 8-11. This vision is dated on the fifth day of the sixth month of the sixth year of his captivity. This was fourteen months after the vision he had (beginning in chapter one). In chapter four, he was told to lie on his left side for 390 days and then on his right side for 40 days; this total of 430 days would almost completely cover fourteen months. Whether he literally lay on his side for the 430 days may be debatable, but at least in the vision he did so. That time was now about over, and a new vision was given.
 - b. As the prophet begins to give details of this vision, he states that the elders of Judah were before him as he sat in his house. "Instead of prompting him to address directly the elders before him, the spirit carried him away *in vision* (not in person bodily) to the temple at Jerusalem. He proceeds to report to them what he witnessed" (JFB, p.25).
 - c. What he saw now is presented as a likeness of a man; it is not specifically said to be the form of a man, but reference is made to his loins and hands. The picture is identical to the likeness he saw in the vision of chapter one, which was seated on the glorious throne. "And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about" (Ezek. 1:26-27).
 - d. In the vision, a hand took the prophet by a lock of his hair and carried him through the air to Jerusalem. He says that it was "the spirit" who thus transported him. Notice that it was "in the visions of God" that he was taken to Jerusalem. He was not taken physically back to the city, but only in the vision was he there. The sights he beheld in the city were as real as though he were literally there.
 - e. The place in the city to which he was taken was the door of the inner gate, which faced toward the north. At this site, the Israelites had set the "image of jealousy," which had elicited the opposition of Jehovah. We are not told the identity of this image; some have supposed that it was that of Tammuz, which is named in verse fourteen, but that is conjecture.
 - 1) God had identified himself as a jealous God, unwilling to share the devotion he deserves with any other entity. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exod. 20:3-6).
 - 2) By their idolatry, Israel had provoked God to jealousy, but not the common sinful jealousy with
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which humanity is plagued. Rather, it is a righteous jealousy, which is unwilling to accept divided homage. No man can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24).

- 3) God had shown Israel ahead of time the folly of such divided loyalties. "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered *with fatness*; then he forsook God *which* made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange *gods*, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new *gods that* came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw *it*, he abhorred *them*, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with *that which is* not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which are* not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation" (Deut. 32:15-21).
- f. By erecting an idolatrous image at the site of the temple, they had polluted it. "For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it" (Jer. 7:30).
- g. In the vision the prophet was seeing of Jerusalem, he also beheld the depiction of the glory of God which he had seen in the plain: "And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face" (Ezek. 3:22-23; cf. 1:4-28).
2. Verses 5-6: "Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? *even* the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations."
 - a. The **first** of four abominations identified in the chapter was the image of jealousy which desecrated the holy temple.
 - b. The polluted state of the temple made it impossible for the holy God to reside therein. He was about to take leave of this "residence." Even Solomon understood that God did not literally dwell in the temple, but that his presence was manifested there (1 Kings 8:11). "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27).
 - c. The glorious edifice without the presence of God was merely an empty building. If God could be removed from the Bible, that book would be an empty, meaningless book. When foolish and evil men so-pervert God's word, polluting it by inserting into the text human doctrines, and twisting the truth into error, the production is not God's truth, but a powerless production of man's vanity.
 - d. As awful as this first abomination was, the Lord forewarned the prophet that those he would next see were even worse. It was necessary for Ezekiel and the Israelites to see the real condition of the nation as God perceived it.

B. Ezekiel 8:7-18: The Other Abominations.

1. Verses 7-10: "And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about."

- a. The **second** of the four abominations is presented here—the worship of beasts. Ezekiel was brought to the door of the court; the court surrounded the temple. He saw a hole in the wall, and was told to enlarge it. In the vision, as he dug into the wall, he discovered a door. He was told to pass through the door, where he would behold the other abominations that were done there.
 - b. As he passed through the door, he saw many forms of creeping things and beasts and idols, on the wall within. The Egyptians painted various scenes on the walls of their buildings. In this case, images of all kinds of animals were portrayed on the wall of the chamber the prophet had entered (in the vision).
 2. Verses 11-12: “And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.”
 - a. In the chamber were seventy elders who were burning incense in worship to these beasts. “They were elders, not priests, but had assumed the priestly role in their religious malpractice. If the incense prepared for the temple worship of Jehovah was that which they burned unto these idols, the blasphemy was compounded. Who were these seventy and what, if any, is the significance of their number?” (McClish, MSOP, pp.116f). Elders had been selected by Moses to assist him in solving problems that arose (Ex. 18); seventy of these elders are referred to in Exodus 24:1. The Sanhedrin Court was comprised of seventy men.
 - b. One man is identified by name, Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Shaphan was the name of the scribe who read to Josiah the newly-found book of God’s law found in the temple (2 Kings 22:8-11). This man was one of the leaders in this idolatrous practice pictured in the vision. The name means “God hears,” yet Jazzaniah’s actions repudiate his name.
 - c. This idolatrous practice conducted by these (and doubtless many others) was done secretly in the dark. They based their practice on the supposition that the Lord had deserted the earth. Apparently they thought that he had abandoned Israel, since the Babylonians had already ravaged Jerusalem on two occasions, killing and enslaving many of the citizens. They seem to be blaming God for the fact that they worshiped idols! “Since God will not help us, perhaps these other gods will!”
 3. Verses 13-14: “He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which *was* toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.”
 - a. Tammuz: “Sumerian god of vegetation. The worship of Tammuz by women in Jerusalem was revealed as one of the abominations in Ezekiel (8:14-15). According to the pagan religion, Tammuz was betrayed by his lover, Ishtar, and as a result dies each autumn. The wilting of the vegetation at that time of year is seen as a sign of his death. This caused great mourning in the ancient world, and was why the women in Jerusalem wept” (Holman).
 - b. “Whilst the men of the nation, represented by the seventy elders, were secretly carrying on their idolatrous worship, the women were sitting at the temple gate, and indulging in public lamentation for Thammuz” (Keil, Vol. I, p.122).
 - c. “Tammuz...the paramour of Venus—and of the same name as the river flowing from Lebanon—killed by a wild boar, and according to the fable, permitted to spend half the year on earth, and obliged to spend the other half in the lower world. An annual feast was celebrated to him in June (hence called Tammuz in the Jewish calendar) at Byblos, when the Syrian women, in wild grief, tore off their hair, and yielded their persons to prostitution, consecrating the hire of their infamy to Venus; next followed days of rejoicing for his return to the earth—the former feast being called ‘the disappearance of Adonis,’ the latter, ‘the finding of Adonis’” (JFB, p.227).
 - d. The women crying for Tammuz is the **third** of the four abominations seen by the prophet. “At least
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as early as the time of Josiah and Jeremiah, the women of Judah had begun to lend their support to idolatry (II Kings 23:7; Jer. 7:18)" (McClish, MSOP, p.118).

- 1) 2 Kings 23:7: "Then he tore down the *ritual* booths of the perverted persons that *were* in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image" (NKJ).
 - 2) Jeremiah 7:18: ""The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and *they* pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger" (NKJ).
4. Verses 15-16: "Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east."
- a. The Lord asked the prophet whether he had seen and comprehended the scene he had just observed. He assured him that there were greater abominations than what he had seen.
 - b. The **fourth** of the four abominations of the chapter was the twenty-five men, their backs toward the temple and their faces toward the sun in the east. They were worshipping the sun. Notice that these men had positioned themselves between the porch of the temple and the altar. This was considered a holy place. "Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where *is* their God?" (Joel 2:17).
 - c. These men had turned their backs on the Lord; they placed greater emphasis on the creation than on the Creator. The worship of heavenly bodies (including the sun) was prohibited by the Mosaic Law. "And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded" (Deut. 17:3).
 - d. "Why was this scene a greater abomination than its predecessors (v.6,13,16)? Perhaps its proximity to the holy place itself and the involvement of the priesthood make it so. The fact that Ezekiel was himself a priest who was utterly loyal to Jehovah (Ezek. 1:3) would make the corruption of the priesthood in his beloved home city particularly odious and shocking" (McClish, MSOP, pp.119f).
5. Verses 17-18: "Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet* will I not hear them."
- a. Here the Lord adds to his list of indictments against Israel. They had practiced idolatry, with the many abominable activities that accompanied it. And they had filled the land with violence. They violated the laws against idolatry, and were also guilty of violating the laws that required them to deal with each other kindly and honestly.
 - b. *They put the branch to their nose.* "This is supposed to mean some branch or branches, which they carried in succession in honour of the idol, and with which they covered their faces, or from which they inhaled a pleasant smell, the branches being odoriferous. That the heathens carried branches of trees in their sacred ceremonies is well known to all persons acquainted with classic antiquity..." (Clarke, p.444).
 - c. God stated that he would not show compassion toward them when he sent punishment upon them. Their loud cries to him for help would go unheeded. Such is the penalty of rebelling against him.
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EZEKIEL 9

A. Ezekiel 9:1-8: A Vision of Slaughter.

1. Verses 1-2: "He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man *with* his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them *was* clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar."
 - a. Ezekiel 9:1-2: "Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, 'Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each *with* a deadly weapon in his hand.' And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them *was* clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar" (NKJ).
 - b. The previous chapter closed on a note of warning, a threat directed against Jerusalem for the sins of the people. This threat of punishment is now to be executed. "Ezekiel hears the terrible voice of Almighty God calling the watchmen of the city to draw near. The commission they were to fulfill is implied by the fact that each was to come equipped with his weapon of destruction or slaughter in hand. Ironically, the very ones who normally stood watch as protectors would now be given the work of destroyers" (McClish, MSOP, p.121).
 - c. These men in the vision were heavenly beings, not mere men. They came from the north, the very direction from which the Babylonian army was to come in their invasion of Palestine. One of the men was dressed in a linen garment, and instead of having a battle axe, was armed with a scribe's inkhorn. An inkhorn was a small container made of horn or other material, used obviously to hold ink. This man's work will be shown later.
 - d. These men, apparently seven in number, came and stood beside the brasen altar, awaiting further instructions from the Lord.
 2. Verses 3-4: "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which *had* the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."
 - a. In the vision, the prophet sees the manifestation of God, rising above the cherub, and taking up a position at the threshold of the temple. The source of the following instructions is the Almighty.
 - b. The man who was dressed in linen and equipped with the inkhorn was told to go through the city and mark those individuals on the forehead who had opposed the abominations done there. Even though the impression is left that virtually the entire population had been involved in the idolatry described before, there were some who had besought God's help in ridding the city of these abominations.
 - c. Some unidentified mark was to be placed on the forehead of each of the faithful ones. We are not told what that mark was, but some have supposed it was the sign of the cross; this is speculation. It is unnecessary for us to know what the mark was, or that it had any particular or uniform shape. It was intended as an identification mark for the other six (or five) men who comprised the company.
 3. Verses 5-7: "And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom *is* the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which *were* before the house. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the
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courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.”

- a. These men with the battleaxes were told to follow the man in the linen clothing, and slay every one who did not have the mark on their forehead. They were not to spare anyone; they were to have pity for no one; the old and the young, men and women, were to be slain. They were to begin their work at the temple.
- b. Ezekiel saw these men begin to slay the old men who were in front of the temple. They were told to defile the house with dead bodies. They were faithful to their orders; they went forth and slew those in the city who did not bear the mark on their forehead.
- c. The temple had ceased to be the holy place it was intended to be. Instead of serving to bring the people into a closer fellowship with God, it had become the fountainhead of the spiritual corruption which had defiled the whole nation.
- d. The fact that some were to be spared in the slaughter of the majority shows that God is able to show mercy even as he dispenses punishment. Once again, we are impressed with the fact that the majority was in the wrong, and the righteous were a distinct minority. Truth, holiness, and righteousness are not palatable to the majority.
- e. Compare: "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev. 7:2-3).

B. Ezekiel 9:8-11: The Prophet Cries Out for Jerusalem.

1. Verse 8: “And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?”
 - a. “In spite of all the abominations God had shown him, thus logically convincing him that his corrupt countrymen deserved the severest Divine retribution, the sight of the actual slaughter proves too much for Ezekiel. His emotions get the better of him....Forgetting momentarily that the innocent were to be marked for preservation, or (perhaps more likely), remembering that Jeremiah had recently written that not one righteous man could be found in Jerusalem (Jer. 5:1), Ezekiel asks God if he would not preserve any of Israel in his judgment upon Jerusalem. He seems to be asking God to spare some of the wicked if necessary, in order to preserve some residue” (McClish, MSOP, pp.122f).
 - b. God had made provision for the deliverance of the righteous. They would be spared. But the prophet is moved by a tender heart to influence God to spare also some who did not deserve compassion. In our ignorance and misguided sensitivity, we may seek to include in the company of the redeemed certain ones who do not belong. Only God’s word reveals the qualifications of the saved; we are not able to set the prerequisites. No man has the authority or ability to exclude those God accepts or to include those God rejects.
 - c. Similar statements, indicating profound concern for the lost, are given in other passages.
 - 1) Genesis 18:16-33 shows the intervention of Abraham in behalf of the people of Sodom and the other cities of the plain. He gained God’s agreement not to destroy those cities if ten righteous souls could be found in their midst.
 - 2) Numbers 11:2: "And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched."
 - 3) Numbers 14:19: "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."
 - 4) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be

saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

2. Verses 9-10: "Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah *is* exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, *but* I will recompense their way upon their head."
 - a. God was concerned about the prophet's question, and directed an answer to help him resolve his inner turmoil. What the Lord said shows that he means what he says! No man could be as deeply compassionate as God is, but no man is able to perceive the awfulness of sin as well as he can.
 - b. Ill-advised sympathy can produce more evil and suffering in the future if definitive action is not taken now to preclude evil beliefs and practices. The destruction of Nadab and Abihu doubtless prevented many others from following their example (Lev. 10:1-2). The annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah stymied the spread of the particularly vile practices they followed.
 - c. God reminded Ezekiel of the awful sins of Israel and Judah. What he is meting out in this visionary assault on Jerusalem was well-deserved by every guilty party. The little children may not have been so little, and if they had continued to live, they would have followed the footsteps of their parents. God's view of human history takes into account not merely the present, but the immediate and far distant future. The prophet had just been shown the abominations of the elderly people in the inner chambers of the temple (8:12).
 - d. They had filled the city with blood and perverseness; their wickedness was so widely-spread that it was essential that it be punished by God's direct intervention. The common attitude of the people was that God had not helped his people, and so it was necessary that they seek help from the idols. They even thought that God was unable to see the plight of Israel and was indifferent or unaware of their rebellion against him.
 - 1) Psalms 139:7-10: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."
 - 2) Proverbs 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good."
 3. Verse 11: "And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which *had* the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me."
 - a. In the meantime, the man clothed with linen approached the Lord, reporting that he had finished the job he had been given. All of the righteous had been identified by the mark on their foreheads.
 - b. All that was left to be done was the slaughter, at the hands of his companions with the battle-axes, of those who were not identified as righteous.
 - c. In the midst of the slaughter, this gentle reminder is given, calling attention to the mercy God is showing to those who have kept themselves uncorrupted by evils of the majority.
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EZEKIEL 10

A. Ezekiel 10:1-8: The Cherubims, the Fire and the Wheels.

1. Verses 1-2: "Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, *even* under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter *them* over the city. And he went in in my sight."
 - a. In chapter nine, the Lord came down from the throne above the cherubims to issue orders; here he has resumed his seat above the cherubims. "The four cherubim (initially called 'living creatures') which formed the chariot-throne of Jehovah were a principal part of Ezekiel's first vision in the plain of Chebar (1:5-26). Their presence is implied in the beginning scenes of his second vision (8:2-4). Now, in chapter 10, they are seen in almost every verse. He had also seen a firmament above the cherubim and beneath the throne (1:22,26). The Lord, in the likeness of a glorious man, was seen on the throne in 1:26-27 and 8:2, but here (10:1) his presence is taken for granted due to the earlier descriptions. In John's vision into the portals of Heaven he saw the same heavenly beings, nearer God's throne than any others, and perpetually praising God (Rev. 5:6-9)" (McClish, MSOP, p.124).
 - b. The angel clothed in linen was told to obtain coals of fire from the midst of the cherubims, and to scatter the coals over the city (Jerusalem). This angel had been given the job in chapter nine of putting a mark on the forehead of those citizens of Jerusalem who were faithful. Many years earlier, an angel was sent to place a coal of fire on Isaiah's tongue: "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isa. 6:6-7). The purpose of the coals of fire in our text is for the destruction of Jerusalem.
 2. Verses 3-8: "Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, *and stood* over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory. And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard *even* to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh. And it came to pass, *that* when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels. And *one* cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that *was* between the cherubims, and took *thereof*, and put *it* into the hands of *him that was* clothed with linen: who took *it*, and went out. And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings."
 - a. "As the scribe [cf. 9:1-4] came to the cherubim, a cloud (representing the presence of God, I Kings 8:10-11; Isa. 6:1-2) billowed up, spread throughout the court, and filled both it and the temple. The brightness of God's glory shone above and through it all. This spectacular sight was accompanied by the awesome sound—compared to the terrible voice of God Almighty—of the rustling of the cherubic wings" (McClish, MSOP, p.125).
 - b. The angelic scribe was instructed to take some of the fire; he approached and stood beside the wheels. One of the cherubs put forth his hand into the fire and took up some of the coals of fire; he placed these into the hands of the linen-clothed scribe, who went out to spread the fire upon the city.
 - c. "Verse 8 explains that the cherubim not only had wings but man-like hands under their wings, further confirming that these were the same heavenly creatures Ezekiel saw in his opening vision (cf. 1:8). The destruction of Jerusalem has now been depicted under the figures of both sword (ch. 9) and fire. Its doom is certain, and its destruction will be complete!" (McClish, MSOP, p.125).
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B. Ezekiel 10:9-22: The Lord Departs from the Temple.

1. Verses 9-14: “And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels *was* as the colour of a beryl stone. And *as for* their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, *were* full of eyes round about, *even* the wheels that they four had. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel. And every one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, and the second face *was* the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.”
 - a. “The description of the appearance of the cherubim in these verses coincides for the most part verbatim with the account of the theophany in ch. 1. It differs from this, however, not only in the altered arrangement of the several features, and in the introduction of certain points which serve to complete the former account; but still more in the insertion of a number of narrative sentences, which show that we have not merely a repetition of the first chapter here. On the contrary, Ezekiel is now describing the moving of the appearance of the glory of Jehovah from the inner court or porch of the temple to the outer entrance of the eastern gate of the outer court; in other words, the departure of the gracious presence of the Lord from the temple: and in order to point out more distinctly the importance and meaning of this event, he depicts once more the leading features of the theophany itself” (Keil, Vol. I, p.138).
 - b. “The description of the wheels in vers. 9-11 harmonizes with ch. 1:16 and 17, with this exception, however, that certain points are given with greater exactness here; such, for example, as the statement that the movements of the wheels were so regulated, that in whichever direction the front one turned, the others did the same” (Keil, Vol. I, p.139).
 - c. When the wheels are addressed in verse thirteen, they respond by moving (verses 15-16). In verse four-teen, the face of a cherub is mentioned, instead of the face of an ox (1:10). "And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of **the** cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third face the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle" (Ezek. 10:14, ASV). The definite article does not appear before the other named faces, but does appear in the case of the cherub. It may mean that the cherub indicated was the one who had given the linen-clothed angelic being the coals of fire.
 2. Verses 15-19: “And the cherubims were lifted up. This *is* the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar. And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also*: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them. Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also *were* beside them, and *every one* stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above.”
 - a. The cherubim rise up at this point in the vision. The description given of their motion shows that they operated in perfect harmony. Notice that they are described as one “living creature,” meaning that they form one united entity.
 - b. “As the cherubim throne-chariot begins to move, so does the ‘glory of Jehovah,’ that is, the Lord himself. He moved from the threshold (where he had been since 9:3), from whence he had issued all of his judgments against Jerusalem, to take up his throne above the cherubim. They bore him away from the ungrateful and unworthy nation on their heavenly wheels and wings” (McClish, MSOP, p.127).
 - c. “The departure of the symbol of God’s presence from the temple was preparatory to the destruction
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of the city. This had been foretold in Deut. 31:17....Successive steps are marked in his departure; so slowly and reluctantly does the merciful God leave his house. First, he goes up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the temple (ch. 9:3); then he elevates his throne above the threshold of the house (v. 10); leaving the cherubim 'on the right side of the house' (v. 3), he mounts up and sits on the throne (v.4); he and the cherubim, after standing for a time at the door of the east gate (vv. 18,19), where was the exit to the lower court of the people—leave the house altogether (ch. 11:2,3), not to return till ch. 43:2" (JFB, p.233).

- 1) Deuteronomy 31:17: "Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us?"
 - 2) Compare: "Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, *that there shall not be* a man *left*: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!" (Hos. 9:12).
3. Verses 20-22: "This *is* the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they *were* the cherubims. Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man *was* under their wings. And the likeness of their faces *was* the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward."
- a. "These verses are intended to provide further assurance that the cherubim of the first vision (1:5-21) are the same as these. While the Lord's appearance upon their chariot-throne (in the former) implied his desertion of the holy of holies, the information given in this second vision states the fact clearly. While we may not be (and do not have to be) certain of the meaning of every detail of the material in this chapter, the intended message to Ezekiel (and to all readers) is clear: God had departed the temple in Jerusalem, and the time of her fiery judgment has come!" (McClish, MSOP, p.128).
 - b. The departure of the Lord from the temple is depicted by the scenes presented in the vision. The fact had not yet occurred, but in a short time was to take place. This was a major event in Israel's history. They were unwilling to perceive their fallen state; they did not comprehend the dire condition they had developed.
 - c. Some of the people had decided that God did not see their problems; they did not conceive of any way that he could or would help them.
 - 1) Ezekiel 8:12-13: "Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations that they do."
 - 2) Ezekiel 9:9: "Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah *is* exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not."
 - d. After Samson had revealed the true secret of his great strength, and had been shorn by the Philistines, he did not feel any different from before, and he still looked the same (except for the absence of his hair). When he arose to fight his enemies, he was quickly subdued. "And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house" (Judg. 16:20-21).
 - e. Because God's people live by faith (2 Cor. 5:7), we cannot determine our relationship on the basis of emotion; one who *feels* very close to the Lord, may in fact be very far from him. To walk by faith is to follow the teachings of the gospel.
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EZEKIEL 11

A. Ezekiel 11:1-13: The Prophet is Instructed to Oppose the Sinful Leaders of Judah.

1. Verses 1-3: "Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the LORD'S house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these *are* the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city: Which say, *It is not near*; let us build houses: this *city is* the caldron, and we *be* the flesh."
 - a. The prophet is now taken by the Spirit to the east gate of the temple court, where he beheld twenty-five men at the door. These men were princes (rulers). Ezekiel previously saw the seventy elders who had corrupted themselves by idolatry (8:12), and twenty-five priests who worshiped the rising sun (8:16). Here, twenty-five rulers of the people are depicted as rebellious. These three classes of people, which are representative of the majority in each group, are shown to be corrupt. The spiritual condition of the nation is thus exposed.
 - b. Jaazaniah the son of Azur is a different man from Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan (8:11). The name means "God hears," yet in each case, Jaazaniah's actions repudiate his name. Pelatiah [*God Delivers*] the son of Benaiah is also identified by name, but we know nothing more of Jaazaniah and Pelatiah than that which is given in the text here.
 - c. Jaazaniah and Pelatiah erred by giving counsel to the people which ran contrary to God's will. The Holy Spirit told the prophet that these men were guilty of devising lawlessness (iniquity) and giving wicked counsel to the people of Jerusalem.
 - d. The statement in verse three is difficult, but the evident meaning is most likely to have reference to the prophet Jeremiah's counsel: "Build ye houses, and dwell *in them*; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them" (Jer. 29:5). "The only way in which the words can be made to yield a sense in harmony with the context, is by taking them as a tacit allusion to Jer. 29:5" (Keil, Vol. I, p.144).
 - 1) Jeremiah tells the exiles to build houses in Babylonia, and prepare for a long stay; they would not be returning home for a long time. But these wicked rulers of our text are telling them that there is no need for them to build houses; that they would have a speedy return from captivity.
 - 2) "This word of Jeremiah the authorities in Jerusalem ridiculed, saying 'house-building is not near,' *i.e.* the house-building in exile is still a long way off; it will not come to this, that Jerusalem should fall either permanently or entirely into the hands of the king of Babylon" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.144f).
 - e. The second part of verse three is also a statement made by the evil rulers of Jerusalem. The city, they say, is a caldron (pot) and we inhabitants are the flesh. They do not mean that they would all be cooked in the city. "The point of comparison is this: as the pot protects the flesh from burning, so does the city of Jerusalem protect us from destruction" (Keil, Vol. I, p.145).
 - 1) These false advisors maintained that the great walls of Jerusalem would protect the citizens who sought refuge within them were as safe from the Babylonian assaults just as a pot protects its contents from the direct ravages of the flame over which it is hung.
 - 2) Jeremiah had to deal with Hananiah, who told the exiles they would be returning home within two years: "And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels

of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon” (Jer. 28:1-4).

- f. “The correctness of our explanation is evident both from ch. 24:3,6, where the figure of pot and flesh is met with again, though differently applied, and from the reply which Ezekiel makes to the saying of these men in the verses that follow (vers. 7-11). This saying expresses not only false confidence in the strength of Jerusalem, but also contempt and scorn of the predictions of the prophets sent by God. Ezekiel is therefore to prophesy, as he does in vers. 5-12, against this pernicious counsel, which is confirming the people in their sins” (Keil, Vol. I, p.145).
 - g. Clarke thought that the reference to the pot (Jerusalem) and flesh (the inhabitants) was a ridicule on the part of these wicked princes toward Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 1:13); that they would have been boiled long ago if Jeremiah had been correct. Another view suggested by Clarke was that the princes were only stating their willingness to suffer that fate, if such it should be, that they were committed to rebellion. But the view we have taken above seems to be better.
2. Verses 4-7: “Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man. And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, *every one of them*. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.”
 - a. What these men were telling the people was in direct opposition to what God was saying through the prophets. Therefore, Ezekiel is ordered to speak out against these men. The more success these evil men had, the greater the guilt and punishment of the people. We owe it to mankind in general, and to those who are under the influence of false teachers today, to oppose these errorists vigorously. Every one duped by a false teacher depopulates heaven and increases the population of Gehenna!
 - 1) "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18).
 - 2) "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:4-5).
 - 3) "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things)" (Phil. 3:17-19).
 - b. The Spirit spoke to Ezekiel, giving him a message to deliver to the “house of Israel.” During the time of the divided kingdom, the northern ten tribes were known as *Israel* and the southern two tribes were called *Judah*. That distinction was now destroyed; this division no longer existed. Ezekiel’s message was directed toward the whole house of Israel, but especially to those who were still in Jerusalem. How did he speak to them? Was it orally? Or was it through sending the message to them in written form? Since he was not literally in the city (cf. 8:3), it would appear that he did not directly speak to the people of Jerusalem.
 - c. The Lord affirmed that he knew fully the things that they had said and even what came into their minds. Since he knew their evil thoughts and words, he certainly was aware of their wicked deeds. He is also fully appraised of the thoughts, words and deeds of the righteous:
 - 1) "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine

uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. 139:1-4).

- 2) "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3).
 - d. He knew that they had multiplied the slain, even filling the streets with the dead. Their criminal blood-letting had brought upon them the vicious Babylonians, who had slain many. "Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence. Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled" (Ezek. 7:23-24).
 - e. Using the figure of the pot and the flesh in a different sense, the Lord affirms that the city would indeed be the caldron and they would be the flesh; they would be cooked, but he would bring some of them out of the pot. They would be delivered from the pot, but would find themselves in the fire! This may be the original source of our saying, "Out of the frying pan and into the fire." Verse nine will show that those who were to be spared from the ravages of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, would fall into the hands of the cruel Babylonians, who would execute severe judgment upon them.
3. Verses 8-10: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they *are* the flesh, and this *city is* the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. They feared the brutality of the pagan armies, and with good reason. If they had remained loyal to God, there would have been no need for them to be in terror of even the most vicious and powerful foe; the Lord would have protected them. "Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year" (Exod. 34:23-24).
 - b. But since they had rebelled continually against God, and despite his sending prophets to turn them back to his law, they had hardened themselves in their iniquity. Thus, God would use the Babylonian hordes as a tool with which to punish them.
 - c. The destructive power of Babylon would slay thousands, and the survivors would not evade punishment. They would be judged "in the border of Israel." When Jerusalem fell, King Zedekiah and his sons were taken to Riblah (located near Israel's border), where a cruel penalty was exacted.
 - 1) 2 Kings 25:4-7: "And the city was broken up, and all the men of war *fled* by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which *is* by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees *were* against the city round about:) and *the king* went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon."
 - 2) Others were also slain at Riblah: "And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land *that were* found in the city: And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah: And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah

was carried away out of their land" (2 Kings 25:18-21).

- 3) Jeremiah 52:9-10: "Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah."
4. Verses 11-12: "This *city* shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; *but* I will judge you in the border of Israel: And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that *are* round about you."
 - a. The city of Jerusalem would not be their caldron and they would not be the flesh, in the way they had thought. Those who escaped the destructive Babylonian assault would be judged in the border of their country. Instead of being a protection to them, Jerusalem would be the trap from which they could not extricate themselves.
 - b. In keeping with his promises and plan, God would see to it that a remnant of the descendants of Jacob would be spared. Although many have tried to eradicate the Jews from the earth, they have been unable to do so. Why? God's promise! Compare: "For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11).
 - c. When the survivors saw the full significance of the Babylonian invasion and capture of Israel, they then would perceive that God is really God, and that he truly meant what he had said in his law. Their many violations of his will finally led them to the just punishment inflicted on them by the Babylonians. They should have kept themselves pure from the pollutions of the heathen nations around them, but they did not. The only way they could have retained their purity before God was by keeping his law.
5. Verse 13: "And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?"
 - a. It appears from this statement that Ezekiel was actually in Jerusalem, and had spoken directly to the people, and that Pelatiah fell dead in the process. "So far, however, as the fact itself is concerned, we must bear in mind, that as it was only in spirit that Ezekiel was at Jerusalem, and prophesied to the men whom he saw in spirit there, so this death of Pelatiah was simply a part of the vision, and in all probability was actually realized by the sudden death of this prince during or immediately after the publication of the vision. But the occurrence, even when the prophet saw it in spirit, made such an impression upon his mind, that with trembling and despair he once more made an importunate appeal to God, as in ch. 9:8, and inquired whether he meant to destroy the whole of the remnant of Israel" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.147f).
 - b. The death of this rebel was on the order of the demise of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Ezekiel properly perceived that the death of this leading rebel was representative of the destruction of the nation. He also thought that this meant that no one would be spared, hence he besought the Lord as to whether this meant that none of the remnant would be preserved.
 - c. In view of the fact that Pelatiah's name means "God delivers," his sudden execution before the prophet created doubt in Ezekiel's mind as to the future of any member of the nation.

B. Ezekiel 11:14-21: Comforting Promises are Given to the Exiles.

1. Verses 14-15: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, *even* thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, *are* they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession."
 - a. Ezekiel 11:14-15: "Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, your brethren,
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your relatives, your countrymen, and all the house of Israel in its entirety, *are* those about whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Get far away from the LORD; this land has been given to us as a possession'" (NKJ). Ezekiel 11:14-15: "And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel, all of them, *are they* unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from Jehovah; unto us is this land given for a possession" (ASV).

- b. The word translated "kindred" is the Hebrew term used to identify the near kinsman who was charged with the responsibility to redeem the property or the person of one who had fallen into economic ruin (cf. Lev. 25:25ff; Ruth 2:20—4:4; Jer. 32:7-8). Ezekiel is told that he is to take an interest in those who are in exile (and others who would join them there), and not to be grieved over the fate of the rebellious people presently in Jerusalem.
 - c. Those in Jerusalem were the ones who had said of the exiles, that they had been removed from the land due to their own wickedness, and that they (the ones yet in the city) were now in possession of the land; that God had bequeathed it to them. "Here the self-righteousness of the Jews in Jerusalem is evident. They had assumed that the exiles were taken into captivity because of God's sore displeasure with them. Thus he chased them into a God-forsaken land. On the other hand, they reasoned that he left them in Jerusalem because he was pleased with them. Therefore, God was going to cause them to continue to possess their land. Consequently, Ezekiel's 'kindred' are those with whom he had the common bond of captivity. To these he is now to address God's message" (McClish, MSOP, p.134).
2. Verses 16-17: "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."
- a. Although the exiles had been scattered among the heathen, that did not mean that they were forever cast away from God. He assures the prophet here, and he could pass the word on to them, that he would be a refuge for them in the land of captivity, and would be gathered again back into their own land.
 - b. Through Jeremiah, God had revealed to the people the length of their captivity:
 - 1) Jeremiah 25:11-12: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, *and* an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy** years. And it shall come to pass, when **seventy** years are accomplished, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations."
 - 2) Jeremiah 29:10: "For thus saith the LORD, That after **seventy** years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."
 - 3) 2 Chronicles 36:21: "To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: *for* as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil **threescore and ten years.**"
 - c. This is God's assurance that there was hope for the faithful, that they would return to the land, and have another opportunity to serve God. It was God's intention, with or without their full cooperation, to fulfill the promises he had made to Abraham.
 - 1) Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."
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- 2) Genesis 22:15-18: "And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."
3. Verses 18-20: "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."
- Some of the exiles and their descendants would return to the promised land according to God's plan. When they returned, they would destroy all the vestiges of idolatry and the abominable practices that went along with such.
 - "God would give them one heart when they return, but not miraculously or in spite of their own wills. He would rather forge this new heart in them through the humbling experiences of their captivity and through such preaching as that of Ezekiel. The 'one heart' may be a reference to the reunification of all of the descendants of Jacob into one nation (cf. 37:15-22). Perhaps more agreeable with the immediate context, however, is a reference to the absence of idolatry among them. They would no longer have the divided allegiances fostered by believing in and serving many gods. They would with one heart devote themselves to the true and living God" (McClish, MSOP, p.135).
 - Jeremiah 32:37-39: "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them."
 - When they returned, they would be committed to serving God in harmony with his word. This is what happened when they returned (cf. Ezra, Nehemiah). However, the time eventually came when they fell into sin again, but never again did they as a nation turn to idolatry.
 - "With the new heart, a new spirit will be given—a disposition of unselfish, humble service to God and men. The new heart will replace the heart hardened by idolatry, selfishness, wickedness, and corruption that the Word of God could not penetrate—the heart of adamant stone (Zech. 7:12; cf. Matt. 13:19). God had earlier described his people as 'impudent and stiff-hearted' (Ezek. 2:4) and 'of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart' (3:7). This stone-cold heart will be replaced with a fleshly heart, but fleshly in the sense of being tender and sensitive, responsive to God and his word, rather than carnal and unscriptural. Such a heart will cause them to obey him, the only means by which any people can belong to God and God to them" (McClish, MSOP, pp.135f).
 - There may be an allusion here to the heart that would be common to God's people in the age of the New Covenant. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).
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4. Verse 21: “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.”
 - a. Some of the returning exiles would still have the same disposition of the old days, retaining the old sinful attitudes and practices that were present during the nation’s idolatrous stage. The previous passage did not declare that every single individual of the returnees would be of ideal spiritual condition.
 - b. In this statement, we are shown that the new heart of the preceding verses was not given by any kind of miraculous or irresistible means, that God did not do the work in some direct way so that the individual had no choice in receiving or retaining that condition.

C. Ezekiel 11:22-25: Ezekiel is Taken in the Vision Back to Babylonia.

1. Verses 22-23: “Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which *is* on the east side of the city.”
 - a. In Ezekiel 10, the glory of the Lord is depicted as leaving the temple, which had been intended to serve as a meeting place between God and Israel. "Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims" (10:18). It was no longer God’s house, but a place of idolatry and sin. The Jews of the first century had polluted the temple of their time, so that it could no longer be considered a place of prayer. "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:12-13; cf. John 2:13-17; Matt. 23:37-39).
 - b. The angelic beings, which were a prominent feature in the vision of which the prophet was also part, lifted up their wings and began to leave the doomed city. The heavenly vision moved to the east side of the city and stood upon the mountain.
 - c. The mountain was the Mount of Olives. From this height, the destruction of the city could be clearly viewed. Our Lord gave his famous speech to the apostles from this same location (Matt. 24:3—25:46).
 2. Verses 24-25: “Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had showed me.”
 - a. Ezekiel was transported in the vision back to Chaldea, returning to the place from which he had been taken (8:3-4).
 - b. Back at his station in Babylonia, he reported to his fellow-captives all the things which the Lord had shown him in the vision experience.
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EZEKIEL 12

A. Ezekiel 12:1-7: A Sign Unto the House of Israel.

1. Verses 1-2: "The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they *are* a rebellious house."
 - a. We are not given a definite time for the occurrence of this event, but since it is in keeping with the preceding material, we may assume that it fits into that same time frame. The symbolic act Ezekiel was to perform before the people, had as its purpose a demonstration of the fact that the people still in Palestine would face exile. The symbolic act was done in the land of captivity, but the message it gave was directed especially toward the Israelites back in their own land.
 - b. Although the Babylonians had invaded the land, killed and captured a good many people of Judah in two separate operations, the nation was still intact in Palestine and felt secure with the protection offered by the great walls of Jerusalem. They were still impenitent. Even the exiles evidently held on to a false hope of an early release.
 - c. God's assessment of them was that they were a rebellious nation; they had eyes to see, but did not see; they had ears to hear, but did not hear. They were frequently described with similar language:
 - 1) Isaiah 6:9-12: "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land."
 - 2) Jeremiah 5:21-23: "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand *for* the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone."
 - 3) Matthew 13:13-15: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - 4) Acts 28:26-27: "Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - 5) Romans 10:20-21: "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."
2. Verses 3-4: "Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider,

though they *be* a rebellious house. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.”

- a. The prophet is here directed to carry out the symbolic act of moving out of his city. This would prefigure the departure from the city of the survivors of Babylon’s third siege and assault (589-586 B.C.). Ezekiel was to prepare a pack of things he would need as if he were to be leaving home to be an exile in a foreign land.
 - b. He was to bring forth his pack during the hours of daylight, in full view of the people, for it was intended that they should see what he was doing. It was possible, although doubtful, that they might take heed to this demonstration of what the Lord had been trying to teach them—continued captivity for these captives and captivity in a strange land for those presently still in Jerusalem.
 - c. The supplies he was to gather would be such that an exile would take. Compare: "O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant" (Jer. 46:19; cf. marginal rendering: “instruments of captivity”).
 - d. The prophet was to wait until the hours of darkness to vacate his house. But he was not to leave by way of the gate, but was to dig a hole through the wall, and thus escape. This depicts the departure of King Zedekiah, a few years later, when Jerusalem was taken by the Babylonians:
 - 1) 2 Kings 25:4-7: "And the city was broken up, and all the men of war *fled* by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which *is* by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees *were* against the city round about:) and *the king* went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon."
 - 2) Jeremiah 39:2-4: "*And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, *even* Nergalsharezer, Samgarnebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon. And it came to pass, *that* when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain."
3. Verses 5-7: “Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. In their sight shalt thou bear *it* upon *thy* shoulders, *and* carry *it* forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee *for* a sign unto the house of Israel. And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought *it* forth in the twilight, *and* I bare *it* upon *my* shoulder in their sight.”
 - a. The prophet was to cover his face, so that he could not see the ground. He would be blind (artificially), just as Zedekiah was when he was led away into captivity. His blindness also suggests the fact that the Israelites were themselves spiritually blind (12:2). Further, his inability to see would depict the fact that the people of Israel would be taken into a land of captivity that was unknown to them; they would be led away, not knowing where they went.
 - b. Ezekiel reports that he did as he was instructed. He dug through the wall, not with tools, but with his hands. His action was symbolic of Zedekiah’s silent departure from the city, thus no tool was used lest the enemy might hear.
 - c. “Prepare thee stuff for removing, etc.; better, equipment for a journey, with the implied thought that it is the journey of one going into exile. ‘Bag and baggage,’ all the household goods which an exile could take with him (Ex 12:11,34 may supply an illustration), were to be brought out in broad daylight and piled up opposite his door. Then in the twilight (Revised Version, in the dark, and so in

vers. 7, 12) he was to go forth, not by the door of his house, but by breaking through the wall (with such walls as those of Ezek 13:11 the process would not be difficult), as a man might do who was escaping secretly from a city through the gates of which he dared not pass (ver. 5), and was to start with his travelling chattels upon his shoulder. Lastly (ver. 6), as the strangest feature of all, he was to go forth with his face covered, as one who wished to avoid recognition, as one also who could not see one step of the way before him. This, it is intimated, would startle even the most careless, and in this way he would become, as he had been before in like symbolic acts (Ezek 4; 5.), as Isaiah (Isa 20:2) and Jeremiah (Jer 27:2) had been before him, a sign unto the house of Israel” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

B. Ezekiel 12:8-16: The Prince of Israel Would Die in Babylon but Would Not See Babylon.

1. Verses 8-9: “And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou? Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden *concerneth* the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that *are* among them. Say, I *am* your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove *and* go into captivity.”
 - a. The next morning, the prophet was asked by the Lord whether the people had inquired of the meaning of his actions. His reply to them is to say that his actions symbolized the king’s fate, and that of many of his subjects—they would be taken into exile.
 - b. The word *burden* is often used in Old Testament prophecy to mean “verdict.” This prediction, given in symbolic form, was to show the verdict of heaven against Zedekiah. What Ezekiel had done was meant to picture the king’s departure into captivity.
 2. Verses 12-13: “And the prince that *is* among them shall bear upon *his* shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with *his* eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon *to* the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.”
 - a. The king (whose name is not specified in the prophecy, but is identified in the fulfillment) would go into exile, bearing his own supplies on his own shoulders; he would go forth in the twilight, through a breach in the wall, but he would not be able to see the ground.
 - b. God had spread his net against the city, and would take the king; the Babylonians would be the net by which the king would be ensnared. There would be no escape. In the fulfillment, Zedekiah and his men attempted to evade capture by sneaking out of Jerusalem by night; they were caught.
 - c. He would be taken to Babylon, but he would not see the city, though he would die there. The king had the misfortune of seeing his sons slain before his sight; then his eyes were put out, indelibly imprinting on his mind the picture of the execution of his boys. He spent the remainder of his life in total blindness; he indeed came to live in Babylon, and died there, but he never saw the city.
 - d. Jeremiah 52:7-11: "Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death."
 3. Verses 14-16: “And I will scatter toward every wind all that *are* about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. And they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries. But I will leave a few men of them from the
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sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.”

- a. God vows to scatter the Israelites in every direction; they would be dispersed among the nations of the Gentiles. There would be no one from among the king’s servants to help him; they would be scattered or slain. The severe punishment to befall them would not annihilate them all; there would be enough to remain to enable the Lord to fulfill his ultimate purposes.
- b. There would be survivors to tell to the pagans the story of this great debacle. The sword, the famine and the pestilence would consume most of them, but some would survive; these survivors would spend many years as slaves to the Babylonians.
- c. Then they would come to realize that the Lord is God. The heathen would come to learn about the God of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar finally became a believer in the Almighty. (Cf. Daniel 4).

C. Ezekiel 12:17-20: Eating and Drinking With Trembling.

1. Verses 17-18: “Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness.”
 - a. “Symbolical representation of the famine and fear with which they should eat their scanty morsel in their exile, and especially at the siege” (JFB, p.240).
 - b. “Bread and water” could be taken to mean that there would be a scarcity of provision, but that is not demanded by the expression here (see Keil, Vol. I, pp.161f). In our culture, to feed a prisoner on bread and water indicates a strict, meager diet. But the emphasis here is on the fear and anxiety with which they would eat, under the siege and in captivity; they would live in terror.
 - c. Ezekiel 12:17-18: "Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and anxiety’" (NKJ).
2. Verses 19-20: “And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *and* of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.”
 - a. The people still back in Palestine were to be told that they would all eat their food and drink their water with astonishment and anxiety. This would be done when Nebuchadnezzar came with his great army against them. There would be good reason for them to be in terror.
 - b. The Babylonians would despoil the land of its wealth; the cities would be demolished; the land would be desolate. All of this would be done because of the violence done by the Israelites, along with all the other evil they had done. Too late to do them any good, they would learn that the Lord is God.

D. Ezekiel 12:21-28: A Proverb.

1. Verses 21-23: “And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, what *is* that proverb *that* ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.”
 - a. “The infidel scoff, that the threatened judgment was so long in coming it would not come at all, had, by frequent repetition, come to be a ‘proverb’ with them. This sceptical habit contemporary prophets testify to (Jer. 17:15; 20:7; Zeph. 1:12). Ezekiel at the Chebar, sympathizes with Jeremiah, and strengthens his testimony at Jerusalem. The tendency to the same scoff showed itself in earlier times, but not then developed into a settled ‘proverb’ (Isa. 5:19; Amos 5:18)” (JFB, p.240).
 - 1) Jeremiah 17:15: "Behold, they say unto me, Where *is* the word of the LORD? let it come now."
 - 2) Jeremiah 20:7: "O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and

hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me."

- 3) Zephaniah 1:12: "And it shall come to pass at that time, *that* I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil." Zephaniah prophesied about 630 B.C.
 - b. God directs Ezekiel to declare to the people that the Lord would make their proverb to cease; when they saw the fulfillment of all the dire predictions, they would not use that old saw again; it would be shown to be wrong!
 2. Verses 24-25: "For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I *am* the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. The longsuffering patience of God had prolonged the time to give them space to repent; they did not choose to do so. Rather, the false prophets had invented various divinations which the Israelites had taken for the truth; these so-called prophecies asserted that nothing would befall them. When such false doctrines are shown to be the empty words that they really are, there is small comfort their adherents can derive from them.
 - b. God vows to say the word and will perform his many warnings. But foolish men commonly take the absence of punishment to mean that God will not take action against their wicked ways, or that there is no God at all.
 - c. Ecclesiastes 8:11-13: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God."
 - d. This is the way many today think. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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 the creation" (2 Pet. 3:3-4).
 3. Verses 26-28: "Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, *they of* the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth *is* for many days *to come*, and he prophesieth of the times *that are* far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. The Israelites were unwilling to accept the prophecies of Ezekiel. They either denied them altogether, or at best, they said he described events that were far in the future. In this case, they accepted his words but repudiated any connection they had to them; his words described people of a distant generation.
 - b. But God anticipated their thoughts, and promised that he would fulfill his threats; those he had in mind by the prophecies were even then occupying Jerusalem and Israel; they would live to see the fruition of the strong warnings.
 - c. God's patience is often taken by unbelievers as evidence that no penalty is to be imposed on wrongdoing or that any punishment to be applied is so far in the future that it is not to be feared. But his goodness moves God to give sinful mankind time and opportunity to repent; if they do not repent, the penalty will surely be imposed, and the blessings on the righteous will be forthcoming, all in God's good time.
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:8-9: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish,
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but that all should come to repentance."

- 2) Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

EZEKIEL 13

A. Ezekiel 13:1-16: False Prophets Exposed.

1. Verses 1-3: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!"
 - a. "As ch. 12 denounced the false expectations of the people, so this denounces the false leaders who fed those expectations. As an independent witness, Ezekiel confirms at the Chebar the testimony of Jeremiah (ch. 29:21,31) in his letter from Jerusalem to the captive exiles against the false prophets, wherein he foretells the slaughter by Nebuchadnezzar of the false prophets Ahab and Zedekiah, who should be roasted in the fire and the punishment of Shemaiah and his seed for having 'caused the people to trust in a lie'" (JFB, p.242).
 - 1) Jeremiah 29:21: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes."
 - 2) Jeremiah 29:31: "Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie."
 - b. The false prophets described in the text produced "prophecies" which were tailored to the tastes of the audience. Any preacher who gives the people what they want to hear will be popular with the audience. A doctor who tells his patients only good news, when the facts are something else, will have a great practice—for a while! Unfortunately, many who take heed to the pronouncements of popular false teachers will find out too late that they have been deceived. In eternity and the Judgment, only truth will suffice. Sincere belief of a lie is no better than an overt rejection of the truth.
 - c. The origin of the messages produced by false prophets is their own hearts. They had received no revelation from heaven; they have seen no God-given vision; they have heard no message from Jehovah. The message claimed that there would be a speedy return to Jerusalem; this was what the people wanted to hear, so the false prophets found an audience that was quick to receive their words. The false hope was doomed to be dashed against the harsh rocks of reality!
 - d. The Lord describes false prophets as "foolish." It is an enlightening study to survey the kinds of men who are styled "foolish" in the Bible. The atheist is a fool (Ps. 14:1). The false teacher is a fool (Ezek. 13:3). A blasphemer is a fool (Ps. 74:18). Those who are immoral are fools (Deut. 22:21; 2 Sam. 13:13). One who allows himself to be deceived is a fool (Gal. 3:1). One who will not accept the truth when it is plainly presented is a fool (Lk. 24:25). To presume to speak for God when the message presented is of human origin, is foolish; the result is the destruction of both the speaker and the hearer.
 - e. Jeremiah 23:16, 26: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, *and* not out of the mouth of the LORD....How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart."
2. Verses 4-7: "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made *others* to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have

- ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith *it*; albeit I have not spoken?"
- a. Ezekiel 13:4-7: "O Israel, thy prophets have been like foxes in the waste places. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither built up the wall for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of Jehovah. They have seen falsehood and lying divination, that say, Jehovah saith; but Jehovah hath not sent them: and they have made men to hope that the word would be confirmed. Have ye not seen a false vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, in that ye say, Jehovah saith; albeit I have not spoken?" (ASV).
 - b. "The cunning of the fox in obtaining his prey has been long proverbial. These false prophets are represented as the foxes who, having got their prey by great subtlety, run to the desert to hide both themselves and it. So the false prophets, when the event did not answer to their prediction, got out of the way, that they might not be overwhelmed with the reproaches and indignation of the people" (Clarke, p.455).
 - c. Foxes bear the reputation of being subtle and wise, in a disreputable fashion. Modern false teachers are also sly and subtle. Their aim is purely mercenary; they are unconcerned about their own standing with God, and even less about that of their victims.
 - 1) Song of Songs 2:15: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes."
 - 2) Luke 13:32: "And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected."
 - 3) Romans 16:18: "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
 - 4) Philippians 3:18-19: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things."
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - d. God does not claim these false prophets as his spokesmen; to the contrary, he declares that they have invented their messages in their own hearts. "They are like foxes in the waste, desolate areas, hiding, deceiving, capturing their prey and destroying them. They find habitation among the ruins of the cities and contribute to the devastation. These false prophets had infiltrated the nation with no concern for the nation but only for themselves. The nation was on the verge of crumbling, and they contributed to the already precarious position" (Hatcher, MSOP, p.149).
 - e. These false prophets will not contribute toward the welfare of the nation; they will not oppose anyone who seeks to undermine God's government. To the contrary, their work is directed toward its dissolution. The text accuses them of an unwillingness to stand in the breach (a broken place in the spiritual wall) to stop the error, in the spiritual war then being waged. A hedge was used as a means of protecting a crop from being ravaged by some intruder; these errorists did nothing to strengthen the hedge. In the figures being employed in the text, *wall* and *hedge* are used to represent spiritual protection of God over his people. Instead of trying to bring the people back to God's law, they were taking them farther from God. The only protection the *people* could have was that which God was able to provide, but it would be given only if they returned to his way.
 - f. These false prophets had spoken empty, lying words; the Lord had not authored these messages. These falsehoods had given the people false hope; they longed for the predictions to come true, but there was no possibility that they could.
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- 1) Jeremiah 28:1-4: "And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."
 - 2) Jeremiah 28:15-17: "Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month."
 3. Verses 8-9: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I *am* against you, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. The false prophets had spoken empty words and lies. Because of this, God was opposed to them, and would therefore take action against them. In keeping with Jeremiah's prophecy, the false prophet Hananiah died. Hananiah's prediction that within two full years the exiles would return home was shown to be false. They would be discredited before the people.
 - b. God, being against every false prophet, will see to it that none of their empty, lying predictions are fulfilled. The preeminent false prediction today tries to identify the coming of Christ, despite the plain statements in the scriptures that no one can know when that time will be. If a "prophet" cannot identify the second of the minute of the hour of the day when the Lord will return, it is certain that he cannot identify the week, month, year, decade, century, or even the millennium. Christ knew every detail taught in the Old Testament, and he is the Author of the New Testament; since he said he did not know when the Second Coming would be, it is absolutely certain that neither the Old nor the New Testament can supply that information!
 4. Verses 10-12: "And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and *there was* no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered *mortar*: Say unto them which daub *it* with untempered *mortar*, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend *it*. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where *is* the daubing wherewith ye have daubed *it*?"
 - a. The false prophets had seduced God's people. They did this when they predicted that peace was in the future of Israel. If that should be true, then the prophecies given through God's real spokesmen were false which said there would be war, slaughter, famine, disease, and exile. Two predictions could not be more antithetical. The word of the false prophets is described as "seduction."
 - 1) Jeremiah 6:14: "They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace."
 - 2) Jeremiah 23:17: "They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you."
 - 3) The people listened to the prophets who "whispered sweet" words to them, but had little regard for the truth presented by the genuine prophets: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and
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see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*" (Jer. 6:16).

- b. The work of the false prophets is likened to the construction of a wall. One of them is pictured as having erected the wall and others daubing it with rotten mortar, which could not hold the wall together; it was doomed to fall.
 - c. God would send a rain from heaven upon it, with great hailstones and strong wind, and break down the wall. Too late to do them any good, the people would question the false prophets as to the strength of the "mortar."
5. Verses 13-16: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend *it* with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in *my* fury to consume *it*. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered *mortar*, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered *mortar*, and will say unto you, The wall *is* no *more*, neither they that daubed it; *To wit*, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and *there is* no peace, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. The wall the false prophets had erected would be insufficient to protect the people, for God would see that it was destroyed. So completely would be its fall, that the very foundations upon which it was built would be exposed to view.
 - b. God would wreak vengeance upon the wall and those who constructed it. Their empty words would have no strength when the Babylonian might was brought against Jerusalem. The only protection that could have delivered them was obedience to the will of God, which the true prophets presented. But that was the last thing the people wanted at this stage in their history.
 - c. There are remarkable parallels between this wall daubed with untempered cement of our text and our spiritual situation today:
 - 1) It is possible for us to build our spiritual wall on a faulty foundation, such as human doctrines, a soft and watered-down message, entertainment, coercion (of the Crossroads/Boston variety), or a failure to preach the whole counsel of God.
 - 2) We will build a weak spiritual wall if we allow impurities to corrupt the mortar, such as Calvinism or other human doctrines, corruptions in worship, false moral standards, or compromise.
 - 3) We will erect a weak spiritual wall if we do not use enough cement. We do so if we do not preach the word, or do not preach all of the word, or if we water-down the word of God.
 - 4) Our spiritual wall will be weak if we strive for numbers for the sake of numbers. Cf. Gideon and his three hundred. "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:7).
 - 5) Our spiritual wall will be weak if we use schemes and gimmicks to try to convert the lost or to get members to work. The only obedience that will suffice is obedience from the heart (Rom. 6:17-18).
 - 6) Our spiritual wall will be weak if we "convert" people to some man or to some method.
 - 7) Our spiritual wall will be weak if we allow unfaithful members to go uncorrected. This is a failure to repair the wall. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6).

B. Ezekiel 13:17-23: The Penalty to be Imposed on False Prophetesses.

1. Verses 17-19: "Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the *women* that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive *that come* unto you? And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear *your lies*?"
 - a. Other translations of the passage give the following:
 - 1) Ezekiel 13:17-19: "And thou, son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, that prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows, and make kerchiefs for the head of *persons of every stature* to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and save souls alive for yourselves? And ye have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies" (ASV).
 - 2) Ezekiel 13:17-19: "Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them, 'and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Woe to the *women* who sew *magic* charms on their sleeves and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive? And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?'" (NKJ).
 - b. Although they are not specifically called "prophetesses," they were women who prophesied. They were also guilty of speaking messages which originated in their own hearts; they were not speaking for God. Ezekiel is to speak out in opposition to these false lady prophets.
 - c. There were women who were inspired prophets.
 - 1) Exodus 15:20: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances."
 - 2) Judges 4:4-5: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment."
 - 3) 2 Kings 22:14: "So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her."
 - 4) Isaiah 8:1-3: "Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz."
 - d. Women exert a tremendous influence on society. We might change one man, but perhaps he is the only one to make a change; to change a women will often result in changing the children she trains. The old adage, "The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world," bears much truth.
 - e. Verse 18 is difficult to translate and interpret, as evidenced by the various views of the commentators.
 - 1) Keil's view: "The words of both clauses are figurative, and have been correctly explained by Kliefoth as follows: 'A double charge is brought against the prophetesses. In the first place, they sew coverings together to wrap round all the joints of the hand of God, so that he cannot touch them; *i.e.* they cover up and conceal the word of God by their prophesying, more especially its

rebuking and threatening force, so that the threatening and judicial arm of God, which ought above all to become both manifest and effective through his prophetic word, does not become either one or the other. In the second place, they make coverings upon the heads of men, and construct them in such a form that they exactly fit the stature or size of every individual, so that the men neither hear nor see; *i.e.* by means of their flattering lies, which adapt themselves to the subjective inclinations of their hearers at the time, they cover up the senses of the men, so that they retain neither ear nor eye for the truth.' They do both of these to catch souls. The inevitable consequence of their act is represented as having been intended by them; and this intention is then still further defined as being to catch the souls of the people of God; *i.e.* to allure them to destruction, and take care of their own souls" (p.172).

- 2) Another view is to understand the pillows to be literal items, upon which the prophetesses reclined in an alluring fashion as they delivered their oracles to the Israelite men. The kerchiefs are taken to refer to an article of clothing which made them more attractive to their dupes. These kerchiefs were available in different sizes. The pillows (cushions) were placed at the arms. "Perhaps they made their dupes rest on these cushions in a fancied state of ecstasy, after they had made them at first stand (whence the expression, 'every *stature*,' is used for 'men of every *age*')...**make kerchiefs**—magical *vails*, which they put over the heads of those consulting them, as if to fit them for receiving a response, that they might be rapt in spiritual trance above the world" (JFB, p.244).
 - 3) The view preferred by Keil seems to be more reasonable, but the same result is had in either case: the false prophetesses endeavored to beguile the Israelites into accepting their manufactured oracle, as though it came from Jehovah.
- f. The reason these women were willing to offer the false prophecies was their own self-interest; they did it to obtain barley and bread! The consequences of their actions were grievous: they polluted God in the eyes of his people, by asserting that he was behind their lying messages. And they bartered the souls of the Israelites for a small amount of barley and a piece of bread.
- 1) "They profane God among his people; namely, by delivering the suggestions of their own heart to the people as divine revelations, for the purpose of getting their daily bread thereby (cf. Mic. 3:5); by hurling into destruction, through their lies, those who are only too glad to listen to lying; by slaying the souls of the people which ought to live, and by preserving those which ought not to live, *i.e.* their own souls (Deut. 18:20). The punishment for this will not fail to come" (Keil, Vol. I, p.173).
 - 2) They preserved their own lives by selling their self-made prophecies to the Israelites for barley and bread; but the same process by which they saved their own lives, they destroyed the lives of Israel.
2. Verses 20-23: "Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD."
- a. Other translations of this passage:
- 1) Ezekiel 13:20-23: "Wherefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear,

and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. Because with lies ye have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, and be saved alive: Therefore ye shall no more see false visions, nor divine divinations: and I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah" (ASV).

- 2) Ezekiel 13:20-23: "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I *am* against your *magic* charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds. I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD. Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life. Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD'" (NKJ),
 - b. The Lord stated his opposition and hostility toward their practices. Their practices were very much akin to witchcraft. They lured unsuspecting people into their snares. The imagery is that of bird-hunters who flushed their prey from cover in order to cause them to fly into the net. God said he would free those who were ensnared.
 - c. God declared that he would tear the kerchiefs from them, and deliver his people out of their hand. Too late to do the false prophetesses any personal good, they would learn that the Lord is God.
 - d. These deceivers, by promising blessings that they could not deliver, would sadden the hearts of many. A lie believed produces the same inner effect as though it were the truth; but when the lie is exposed for what it is, those who placed their trust in the falsehood would be totally dejected. But they had also discouraged the righteous, by predicting evil against them, even as they encouraged the wicked. God would make these lying ladies objects of ridicule when the truth became known about them; they would cease to make claims about receiving revelations and seeing visions. They would reap what they had sown.
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EZEKIEL 14

A. Ezekiel 14:1-11: Idols of the Heart.

1. Verses 1-3: "Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?"
 - a. There is no reason to suppose that these elders were from Jerusalem, but rather they were from among the captives in Babylonia. It is not even directly stated in the text that they came to obtain a message from God. The fact that they came to Ezekiel indicates that they had an interest in what he was presenting. God's statement in verse three does suggest that they were interested in making inquiry of God. Their real purpose may have been to entrap the prophet. Their true inner condition was not conducive to receiving any help from Jehovah.
 - b. God's response to their inquiry or presence before the prophet was to denounce them for idolatry. Before exile, the Israelites were given over to idol worship; after entering exile, at least some of them retained their idols in their hearts. Their hearts were still given over to idolatry. These idols had been a stumblingblock to them; it had been the cause of their captivity; it was still a barrier between them and the Living God.
 - c. God would not accept their inquiry; he would have nothing to do with them. "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2).
2. Verses 4-5: "Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols."
 - a. God cannot and will not share residence in the heart of any man who follows another master (Matt. 6:24). "The *heart* is first corrupted, and then the *outward manifestation* of idol-worship follows; they set their idols *before* their eyes. With all their pretence of consulting God now, they have not even put away their idols *outwardly*; implying gross contempt of God. 'Set up,' lit., *raised aloft*; implying that their idols had gained the supreme *ascendency* over them" (JFB, p.246).
 - 1) Proverbs 3:21,23: "My son, let not them [God's words] depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion...Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble."
 - 2) Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart *is* not with thee."
 - 3) 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."
 - b. God says that he will give such people an answer to their questions, but not merely in words; he will answer them by acts of judgment, which they had incurred by their idolatry. He would treat them according to their past and present spiritual condition required. "Though pretending to 'enquire' of me, 'in their heart' they are 'estranged from me,' and love 'idols'" (JFB, p.246).
3. Verses 6-8: "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth

up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.”

- a. Ezekiel is directed to deliver a message to the “house of Israel,” which the elders were supposed to guide. Since the leaders were corrupted with idolatry, the people would be afflicted with this death-dealing practice as well. The message is, “Repent and turn from your idols.” This same message had been delivered by prophets before the Babylonians first entered Palestine, bringing their destruction and captivity. It was not enough for them to repent; they must also turn from their idols.
 - b. The message was addressed to the Israelites and those who sojourned among them. To those who will not repent and turn from idols, God promises to do four things:
 - 1) I will set my face against them.
 - 2) I will make them a sign and a proverb.
 - 3) I will cut them off from the midst of my people.
 - 4) Through these actions, they would know that he is the Lord.
4. Verses 9:11: “And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him*; That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.”
- a. Since it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18), then God will not be a party to a lie. He does not deceive anyone; he does not take part in the promulgation of a falsehood. Therefore, we must understand this passage to be accommodative language.
 - b. “I the Lord have deceived that prophet. That is, he ran before he was sent; he willingly became the servant of Satan’s illusions; and I *suffered* this to take place, because he and his followers refused to consult and serve me. I have often had occasion to remark that it is common in the Hebrew language to state a thing as done by the Lord which he only suffers or permits to be done; for so absolute and universal is the government of God, that the smallest occurrence cannot take place without his will or permission” (Clarke, p.458).
 - 1) 1 Kings 22:20: "And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner."
 - 2) Romans 1:23-24: "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."
 - 3) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - c. God would not punish a man for doing a thing which God coerced him to do. The man did what was in his own heart; God allows each of us that prerogative. The prophet who spoke lies, claiming to be speaking from the Lord, would be punished; and his dupes would likewise be punished.
 - d. The purpose of God’s punishment was for the good of his people. When Israel saw the false prophets punished, who had deceived them, they would be less inclined to go astray in the future; and they
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would thus truly be his people and he would be their God.

B. Ezekiel 14:12-23: Salvation is on an Individual Basis.

1. Verses 12-14: “The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver *but* their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. The grievous nature of Judah’s rebellion against God is illustrated in this passage. God names three of the greatest men of faith, saying that if these were present among the people, they would be able only to deliver their own souls; they would not have the ability to turn the Israelites from sin; they could only be righteous themselves, and leave the ungodly to face their own fate.
 - b. In ancient days, Abraham had been able to persuade God to spare Sodom if ten righteous people could be found in her midst (Gen. 18:23-33). But not even ten righteous souls were to be found there. “Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16).
 - c. Three great men are named in the passage: Noah, Daniel, and Job. In Noah’s day, that great man had preached for perhaps 120 years, and only members of his own immediate family were willing to accept the truth. His personal righteousness could not avert the judgment against the ungodly.
 - d. Noah’s work was directed toward the entire world of his time. The work of Daniel was directed toward the nation of Judah. Job’s activities affected his family and friends. Despite the influence of such men with God, those around them did not avoid punishment. Noah could not save his world; Job could not keep his children from being slain; Daniel, who had been taken into captivity with the many other Israelites, could not avert the disaster by his good standing with God.
 - e. In verse thirteen, God said he would disrupt the food supply, and cause bread to fail by sending a famine in the land. Men and beasts would perish. The reason lying behind the punishment was the sin of the people.
 2. Verses 15-16: “If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: *Though* these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.”
 - a. Using another means of punishment, God said he would bring fearsome beasts into the land; these would attack and destroy the people. The area would become so dangerous, that travelers would not pass through the land.
 - b. Again, God refers to the three great men named earlier, and said that the presence of these three could not avert the devastation depicted.
 3. Verses 17-18: “Or *if* I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.”
 - a. A third means of punishment is introduced. The sword would be brought against the people. The reference is to an invading force, which would slaughter them.
 - b. Once more, the Lord brings up the same faithful three, Noah, Daniel and Job. He stated again that if these three were present, they would only be able to deliver themselves. The reason, as noted earlier, was the unwillingness of the people to repent.
 4. Verses 19-21: “Or *if* I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall
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deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by their righteousness. For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?"

- a. Yet another means of punishment is introduced. This penalty is pestilence. Many would be overcome by these diseases. Even the presence of Noah, Daniel and Job would not keep the penalty from being imposed.
 - b. "So utterly guilty are the Jews, Ezekiel declares, according to the word of the Lord, that not even if there were among them men as eminently righteous as Noah, Daniel, and Job (vv.14-20) were, could their presence avail for the warding off of judgment from the people. Had ten righteous men been found in Sodom it would have been spared; but ten such men in Judea should deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only their own souls, by their righteousness (vv.14-16,18,20)" (JFB, p.249).
 - c. The Lord identifies the four severe judgments that were to fall upon Jerusalem: the sword, famine, noisome beast, and pestilence. The city had not been destroyed at this time. The purpose of the warning was to move the rebels to repent. As of yet, the majority even of the exiles had not come to repentance, but still held on to their idols, and to the false hope of an early deliverance.
5. Verses 22-23: "Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, *both* sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, *even* concerning all that I have brought upon it. And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. Despite the ferocity and extent of the assaults to come upon Jerusalem, God would see to it that there would be a remnant of the people spared. Although they would be delivered from death in the city, they would take their place among those who were already in Babylonian captivity.
 - b. When the latest captives arrive, and report to those already in exile all the abominations that had been done in Jerusalem, the ones already in captivity could take comfort in the fact that God had done what had to be done.
 - c. They would finally see that God was just in his severe judgments. "There is no part of the conduct of God towards man that is not dictated by the purest principles of justice, equality, and truth. He does nothing but what is right; and whatever is right to be done, that ought to be done. In God's justice there is no severity; in God's mercy there is no caprice. He alone doth all things well; for he is the Fountain of justice and mercy" (Clarke, p.459).
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EZEKIEL 15

A. Ezekiel 15:1-5: The Allegory of the Vine.

1. Verses 1-3: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, *or than* a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will *men* take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?"
 - a. In this and the next chapter, the prophet is moved to relate two allegories. These show Jerusalem's ripeness for judgment. Despite their exalted position as God's chosen people, through whom he was to send the Messiah into the world, they were to be punished severely for their rebellion.
 - b. In the present allegory, God speaks of the vine, and the relative paucity of its wood, in contrast to the tree. No one cultivates a vine for the wood it produces; rather, its greatest asset is its fruit.
 - c. One would not take any of its wood to use in building furniture. A man would not even take a part of a vine to use as a peg, to anchor it into a wall, and hang a vessel on it. It might not even be useful or safe to use it as a peg. This same imagery is used in Isaiah 22:23-25: "And I will fasten him *as* a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that *was* upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken *it*."
2. Verses 4-5: "Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for *any* work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for *any* work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?"
 - a. If the a vine or a branch of a vine were to be cast into a fire, each end would be quickly ignited and burned; the middle section would also be consumed.
 - b. Since the vine is useless for any building project while it is whole, how much less its utility for such purposes after it has been burned!
 - c. The point of the story is quite clear: Israel was not worth much to the Lord before being burned by the Babylonian army; they would be worth even less afterwards. One "end" of the branch described as having been burned already (the Northern Kingdom); the other end has been consumed (those outside of Jerusalem toward the south; the middle (Jerusalem) was scorched, and was about to be burned.

B. Ezekiel 15:6-8: The Allegory is Directed Against the People of Jerusalem.

1. Verse 6-8: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from *one* fire, and *another* fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I set my face against them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. Israel is likened to a vine here and in other passages:
 - 1) Psalms 80:8: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it."
 - 2) Jeremiah 2:21: "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?"
 - b. "In the application of the parable, the only thing to which prominence is given, is the fact that God will deal with the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the same manner as with the vine-wood, which cannot

be used for any kind of work. This implies that Israel resembles the wood of a forest-vine. As this possesses no superiority to other wood, but, on the contrary, is utterly useless, so Israel has no superiority to other nations, but is even worse than they, and therefore is given up to the fire" (Keil, Vol. I, p.193).

- c. Christians are branches on the True Vine. If an individual saint does not produce *much* fruit, he is cut off the vine and burned. The only way some Christians can be recognized is by having a sign; there is not enough fruit to identify them as followers of Christ. Such a weak member as this will not escape punishment any more than ancient Israel did. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:1-6).
 - d. Jerusalem, so far, had escaped the extremity to which the rest of their territory had been subjected. They had been "scorched," but evaded full destruction. They could not avoid the impending fire. They had gone out from one fire, but the next one would get them!
 - e. God would make their land desolate because of the sins of the Israelites. They would be removed from the land; the land would be bereft of the people who were intended to be its occupants.
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EZEKIEL 16

A. Ezekiel 16:1-14: Jerusalem's Abominations.

1. Verses 1-5: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity *is* of the land of Canaan; thy father *was* an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And *as for* thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple *thee*; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born."
 - a. This language would have been hard for an Israelite to accept. The very concept was repulsive. They had been born in the land, and had partaken of the nature of the people of that land. The Lord states that their father was an Amorite and their mother was a Hittite, two of the most powerful and evil nations to reside there. The purpose of the message was to convince the people of Jerusalem to see their true spiritual condition; strong words were necessary. Israel had adopted the corrupt practices of the Canaanites, of which the Amorites and Hittites were prominent.
 - 1) Genesis 15:16: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full."
 - 2) Genesis 27:46: "And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?"
 - 3) Genesis 26:34-35: "And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah."
 - 4) Cf. Matthew 3:7: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"
 - b. "According to the allegory, which runs through the whole chapter, the figure adopted to depict the origin of the Israelitish nation is that Jerusalem, the existing representative of the nation, is described as a child, born of Canaanitish parents, mercilessly exposed after its birth, and on the point of perishing....And it is too obvious to need any proof, that the prophetic word does not refer to the city as a city, or to the mass of houses; but that Jerusalem, as the capital of the kingdom of Judah at that time, so far as its inhabitants were concerned, represents the people of Israel, or the covenant nation.... The descent and birth referred to are not physical, but spiritual descent. Spiritually, Israel sprang from the land of the Canaanites; and its father was the Amorite and its mother a Hittite, in the same sense in which Jesus said to the Jews, 'Ye are of your father the devil' (John 8:44)" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.195f).
 - c. In the depiction of their birth, God states that they were not properly cared for upon delivery. The navel cord was not severed; they were not rubbed with salt; and no one swaddled them with proper cloths. If the umbilical cord is not cut and tied after birth, the child will die. Afterwards, the baby is washed. In the ancient east, the baby was rubbed with salt (see Keil, Vol. I, p.197). The new-born was wound up in swaddling clothes. But none of these things was done for this infant, who personified Israel.
2. Verses 6-7: "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: *thy* breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou *wast* naked and bare."

- a. The Lord speaks of himself as having passed by this new-born, outcast infant, and took pity on it. It was still covered with blood, but he declared that it should live. Since then, he had caused it to multiply as the buds of the field; it had become great and wealthy. It wore beautiful ornaments, the best fashions, and lovely hair. This baby girl was the nation of Israel.
 - b. Two things the Lord had done for Israel: “The first embraces what God had done for the preservation and increase of the nation; the second, what he had done for the glorification of Israel, by adopting it as the people of his possession. When Israel was lying in the field as a neglected new-born child, the Lord passed by and adopted it, promising it life, and giving it strength to live. To bring out the magnitude of the compassion of God, the fact that the child was lying in its blood is mentioned again and again” (Keil, Vol. I, p.199).
3. Verses 8-14: “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it *was* perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.”
- a. God’s concern for Israel is depicted as a marriage. He made a covenant with Israel. He spread his skirt over her; this indicated marriage; the cloak was often used as a bed coverlet in ancient times (JFB, p.252). The spreading of the garment over the woman amounted to a vow to marry. "And he said, Who *art* thou? And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman" (Ruth 3:9).
 - b. Verses 9-14 “describe how Jehovah provided for the purification, clothing, adorning, and maintenance of his wife. As the bride prepares herself for the wedding by washing and anointing, so did the Lord cleanse Israel from the blemishes and impurities which adhered to it from its birth” (Keil, Vol. I, p.201).
 - c. The jewel on the forehead is rendered “jewel in your nose” (NKJ) and “ring upon thy nose” (ASV). "The rings, and nose jewels" (Isa. 3:21). Different times and places have varying customs and fashions.
 - d. God had taken great and good care of his spiritual bride. Every necessity had been provided; genuine care and concern was present on God’s part, and expressed in the most appropriate ways. There was every reason for him to expect loyalty from her.
- B. Ezekiel 16:15-34: The Apostasy of Israel.
1. Verses 15-22: “But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: *the like things* shall not come, neither shall it be *so*. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, And tookest thy brodered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, *wherewith* I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and *thus* it was, saith the Lord GOD. Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. *Is this* of thy whoredoms a small matter, That thou hast slain my children, and delivered
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them to cause them to pass through *the fire* for them? And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, *and* wast polluted in thy blood.”

- a. Instead of thanking God for his beneficent bounties bestowed on her, she considered her blessings as being hers by right. She was not thankful; she did not acknowledge that her great blessings were due to God’s goodness, and did not derive from her own inherent greatness. Consequently, she put undeserving trust in her outward advantages; she played the harlot with any passing stranger; she bestowed her favors upon those who had showed no concern for her.
 - b. God accuses her of having taken the jewels he had given to her, and with these made images. Images were worshiped in the most licentious of ways. Israel had adopted the practices of her pagan neighbors. God classified idolatry as spiritual adultery. Other items God had given her she likewise perverted to the use of false worship.
 - c. “And not even content with this, the adulteress sacrificed the children which God had given her to idols....Ezekiel has the Moloch-worship in his eye in the form which it had assumed from the times of Ahaz downwards, when the people began to burn their children to Moloch (cf. 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10), whereas all that can be proved to have been practised in earlier times by the Israelites was the passing of children through fire without either slaying or burning....Amidst all these abominations Israel did not remember its youth, or how the Lord had adopted it out of the deepest wretchedness to be his people, and had made it glorious through the abundance of his gifts. This base ingratitude shows the depths of its fall, and magnifies its guilt” (Keil, Vol. I, pp.206f).
2. Verses 23-34: “And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;) *That* thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary *food*, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied. Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith. How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these *things*, the work of an imperious whorish woman; In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; *But as* a wife that committeth adultery, *which* taketh strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.”
- a. As they progressed into their rebellion, they built high places at every convenient place, compromising their holy calling with the false religions of the land. Using the figure of a harlot, God states that Israel had “opened their feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied their whoredoms.” They were willing to accept any false god of which they learned.
 - b. They had associated with the Egyptians, who were “great of flesh” (a figurative depiction of the gross and lustful religious practices of the people of the Nile). Therefore, God declares that he is forced to take certain steps to penalize his wayward people. He had delivered them into the hands of the Philistines; even these vile people were ashamed of the lewd ways of Israel. Through the centuries, God had allowed the Philistines to gain the ascendancy over Israel at various times.
 - c. They had played the harlot with the Assyrians; but these vicious people had destroyed the northern
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kingdom of Israel. In recent times, they had multiplied their fornication with the Chaldeans, who were soon to overthrow the remnants of Israel still in Canaan. The gods of these pagan lands had been accepted by the Israelites. Their appetite for that which was forbidden was insatiable.

- d. They were so weak in their heart (their commitment to God was so frail), that they were like a brazen harlot; they were more willing to accept strangers instead of their own *husband*. They had multiplied their idolatrous practices to every street corner. Their spiritual adultery was so advanced that they did not take pay, but rather paid their *lovers*. This made them different from other harlots. They were so odious that they exceeded their wicked neighbors in iniquity.

C. Ezekiel 16:35-52: Israel's Punishment.

1. Verses 35-37: "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all *them* that thou hast loved, with all *them* that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness."
 - a. They had "poured out" their filthiness by their spiritual adultery; God would pour out his wrath upon them in punishment. Their unfaithfulness was primarily expressed in idolatry. In idol worship, all manner of fornication was involved. They even offered their children as sacrifices, which is noted in the text as "the blood of thy children."
 - b. Since the manufacture of the idols and the expense of operating the systems involved required money (and effort and time), it is clear that they had squandered a considerable amount of money. The Lord had bountifully blessed them with material success, but instead of using it in his honor, they wasted it, and destroyed their souls in the process, in idolatry. The word "filthiness" is given the marginal reading of "brass" (ASV).
 - c. Israel had adopted idolatry through the influence of the heathen people around them. Instead of keeping themselves separate from the pagans, they had associated with them, and imitated them in various ways. In the process of time, they had allowed their nation to be infiltrated by idolatry, and had plunged into the heathen abominations altogether. Three things are charged against them in the text:
 - 1) They had poured out their filthiness, exposing their nakedness.
 - 2) They had followed abominable idols.
 - 3) They had poured out the blood of their children.
 - d. Because of these corrupt practices, God would cast them into the midst of their "lovers," the heathen people from whom they had learned idolatry. "The law of retribution is the more signally exemplified by God employing, as his instruments of judgment on Israel, those very nations whose alliance and idols Israel had so eagerly sought, besides giving her up to those who had been always her enemies. 'God will make him who leaves God for the world disgraced even in the eyes of the world, and, indeed, the more so the nearer he formerly stood to himself' (Hengstenberg)" (JFB, p.255).
 2. Verses 38-41: "And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more."
 - a. The Mosaic Law decreed the penalty of death to a husband or wife who broke the law of wedlock.
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- 1) Leviticus 20:10: "And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 22:22: "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel."
 - b. Since Israel was guilty of this crime, by breaking faith with God, their punishment also would be death. They are accused of breaking wedlock and shedding blood. They had been unfaithful to God (spiritual adultery) and had offered their children as sacrifices to idols (shed blood), therefore the penalty imposed by the Law would be applied. God would bring blood upon them with fury and jealousy. The anger and vengeance of a husband toward his faithless wife can be harsh.
 - c. The "lovers" Israel had taken would become the source of her punishment. The Babylonians had come against them twice already, and were to return to lay siege against Jerusalem. The city would be taken after great suffering had been inflicted on the inhabitants (famine and disease), and a great number would be killed in the fighting; many others would be deported to Babylonia as slaves.
 - d. In the operation, the invaders would strip them of their gold and jewels, burn their houses, and strip them naked of all that was held dear. Their nakedness would be exposed for all to see; their guilt would be as harsh as that of an adulterous wife. Their pride would be peeled away. Many would be slain with the sword; others would be stoned (literally or figuratively).
 - e. This punishment God would bring against them would teach them an unforgettable lesson that would cause them to quit playing the harlot. They would have no means to pay their lovers.
 3. Verses 42-43: "So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these *things*; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon *thine* head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations."
 - a. God's wrath will be satisfied at last, and he will withdraw his punishment. A parent might punish an unruly child for violations of parental authority, but the transgressions will finally be sufficiently recompensed, and the child will be helped. So it would be with God's judicial wrath.
 - b. They had forgotten the days of their youth, when they walked in the full power of God's blessings and light. "A fertile source of her sin was ingratitude for God's favours to her in her early history" (JFB, p.256). "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them" (Isa. 63:10).
 - c. After their rebellion had been penalized, God would look with favor toward them and help them. But the punishment will have accomplished its intended purpose: they would not allow themselves to be plunged into idolatry again!
 4. Verses 44-52: "Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use *this* proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, *so is* her daughter. Thou *art* thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou *art* the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother *was* an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. And thine elder sister *is* Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, *is* Sodom and her daughters. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as *if that were* a very little *thing*, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw *good*. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified
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thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.”

- a. In verse three, God had moved Ezekiel to describe the people of Jerusalem as being the offspring of an Amorite father and a Hittite mother; that is, they had allowed those Canaanite nations to contaminate them. Here the Lord states that Judah’s present spiritual condition is akin to her mother (the Hittite mother). Like mother, like daughter.
- b. They were also like their sisters, who despised their husbands and children: “thou art akin in guilt to Samaria and Sodom, to which thou art akin by birth. Moab and Ammon, the incestuous children of Lot, nephew of Abraham, Israel’s progenitor, had their origin from Sodom; so Sodom might be called Judah’s sister. Samaria, answering to the two tribes of Israel, is of course, sister to Judah” (JFB, p.256).
- c. As evil as Sodom and Samaria had become, God states that Judah had become even worse. “Judah’s guilt was not positively, but *relatively*, greater than Sodom’s; because it was in the midst of such higher privileges and such solemn warnings” (JFB, p.256). The greater the light and opportunity, the greater the guilt—if the light and opportunities are ignored. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:28-31).
- d. Four sins are charged against Sodom, which also afflicted the people of God. He does not speak of the gross sin of sexual perversion; that sin is named in the next verse; these are added to the list. These same four sins are prevalent in Judah:
 - 1) **Pride.**
 - a) Proverbs 16:18: "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."
 - b) Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - 2) **Fulness of bread.** "And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; *Then* beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 6:10-12).
 - 3) **Abundance of idleness.**
 - a) 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."
 - b) 1 Timothy 5:13: "And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."
 - 4) **Unconcern with helping the poor and needy.** The powerful in a materialistic society often take advantage of the poor and needy; all too often this is the way the rich and powerful became rich and powerful.
 - a) Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his*

hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

- b) 1 John 4:20-21: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."
- e. Do these four sins afflict our nation? Are they present in the Lord's church in America? We are now in a time in our history in which there is great plenty in the land; this we fear is a great reason why the gospel is falling on so many deaf ears, in and out of the church.
- f. The people of Sodom were haughty and committed the abomination for which they are primarily known; for their sinful conduct, God punished them by exterminating them from the earth. Christ later said, however, that if they had had the opportunity of seeing the miracles he did among the Jews, those wicked Sodomites would have repented! "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:20-24).
- g. The Lord compares the people of Judah with the people of Samaria, and says that Judah has become more guilty than their northern counterparts had been. The northern kingdom was destroyed by Assyria, their people slain or enslaved. Judah had been given more opportunities to do right, had benefitted from the work of such great prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah, and retained the temple and the priest-hood; God had blessed them with light and opportunities, but they had eventually apostatized fully, with only a remnant that remained loyal to Jehovah.

D. Ezekiel 16:53-63: A Promise of Restoration.

1. Verses 53-59: "When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then *will I bring again* the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride, Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of *thy* reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all *that are* round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD. For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant."
- a. There can be no actual restoration of Sodom, since they and their city were completely obliterated from the earth; the only residents of Sodom who escaped annihilation were Lot, his wife, and his two daughters; but his wife did not fully escape (Gen. 19). The restoration of Sodom must be taken in an accommodative sense. In verse 55, it is clear that neither Sodom nor the Northern Kingdom of Israel would ever return to their former status; it is equally certain that Judah never was to return to the power and glory she once enjoyed under David and Solomon; indeed, Judah would never again have an earthly king. Perhaps verse 55 is the key to understanding this matter of the restoration of Sodom: it was not to be.
- b. In verse 56, Judah did not stoop to mention the name of Sodom as an example of warning to any who departed from God's way. Now they were to pay for not taking note of that case; they would be brought to shame on account of that omission. Will America learn that lesson? Will those involved

in similar rebellion in the denominational world and in the Lord's church learn it in time to avoid the penalty? "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:6).

- c. It was necessary for God to deal with ancient Judah in the harsh way he did in order to teach them the evils of idolatry and other rebellion; they learned about idolatry, but their descendants returned to rebellion. "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*." (Acts 7:51-53).
 - d. "The captivity of the wicked Jews, and their ruin, shall be as irrevocable as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take v. 53, 55. 'When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them, and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they are more righteous than thou, and then thou shalt return to thy former estate,' But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it, that is, those who now remained there, whom God would deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, Jer 24:9-10. Sooner shall the Sodomites arise out of the salt sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria, than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for, to their shame be it spoken, it is a comfort to those of the ten tribes, who are dispersed and in captivity, to see those of the two tribes who had been as bad as they, or worse, in like manner dispersed and in captivity; and therefore they shall live and die, shall stand and fall, together. The bad ones of both shall perish together; the good ones of both shall return together" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
2. Verses 60-63: "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. However, since God had made great promises affecting the population of the world, which promises required the continuation of Israel as an identifiable people, he would bring them back into Canaan when they had been adequately punished. They began their return from exile in 536 B.C.
 - b. There is no implication that God would have forgotten his covenant with Israel; this is the way he chose to present the statement that he would fulfill his commitments made to and through Israel. The everlasting covenant he mentions at the end of verse 60 is the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).
 - c. Following the return from captivity, Israel would be more committed to the Mosaic Covenant under which they served God. It appears evident that the commitment of those who would serve God under the New Covenant is indicated in the passage: the Old Covenant was made with Israel in the days of their youth; the New Covenant would be made later in their history (Acts 2; Heb. 8).
 - d. God would be "pacified" after giving them into the hand of the Babylonians; he would take action to bring them back to their land (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1-5).
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EZEKIEL 17

A. Ezekiel 17:1-10: The Parable of two Great Eagles.

1. Verses 1-2: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel."
 - a. The words "riddle" and "parable" are used interchangeably in the passage. The prophet is directed to tell the following parable to the Israelites, a story that involves two great eagles. The parable is called a riddle, "because of the deeper meaning lying beneath the parabolic shell" (Keil, Vol. I, p.237).
 - b. The first eagle represents the king of Babylon; the second eagle depicts the king of Egypt.
2. Verses 3-4: "And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants."
 - a. In Exodus 19:4, God is pictured as an eagle who exercises careful watch over Israel, his "eaglets." Cyrus, the ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire, is described as a bird of prey (Isa. 46:11). The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, is presented as an eagle (Jer. 48:40; 49:22).
 - b. The eagle is an appropriate symbol of the Babylonian king, who ruled an empire that included most of the ancient world. As the wings of this parabolic eagle were long and great, so the wings of the Babylonian king extended far and wide.
 - c. In the story the prophet is to relate, the first great eagle flew into Lebanon, and removed the top portion of a tall cedar tree. The cedars of Lebanon were widely known and prized for their size and utility. The eagle carried the part of the tree he had cropped into a land of merchants, and set it up. This place was: "Babylon (2 Ki. 24:15,16), famous for its transport traffic on the Tigris and Euphrates; also, by its connection with the Persian Gulf, it carried on much commerce with India" (JFB, p.261).
 - d. Lebanon "is not a symbol of the Israelitish land, or of the kingdom of Judah; but, as in Jer. 22:23, of Jerusalem, or Mount Zion, with its royal palace so rich in cedar wood...as being the place where the cedar was planted....The cedar is the royal house of David, and the top of it is King Jehoiachin" (Keil, Vol. I, p.238).
 - e. LEBANON: Place name meaning "white" or perhaps "white mountain." A small country at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and the western end of Asia. It has long been a world center of transportation and trade. The proper noun literally means the "White" (mountain), probably derived from the snow-capped Mount Hermon, also known as Sirion (Ps. 29:6). Hermon is often covered with snow, and its white crown offers a majestic and impressive view. The constant snow-coverage is contrasted with the fickleness and apostasy of Israel (Jer. 18). Sandy beaches lie along its Mediterranean coast. Rugged mountains rise in the interior. The country itself is dominated by two mountain ridges, the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains. Both ranges run parallel to the coast. The Lebanon range extends for about 105 miles along the coast, from modern-day Tripoli in the north to Tyre in the south. The mountain ranges are about 6,230 feet high. Some summits reach a height of more than 11,000 feet: the highest peak is el-Qurnat el-Sawda (11,024 ft.). Between the higher parts of the range lie valleys and ravines. The Holy Valley, which collects the water from the Mountain of the Cedars, is one of the most important valleys. It was in this region that the Maronites found refuge in the beginning of their history. This Holy Valley has retained its significance throughout the ages. Ain Qadisha (Spring of the Holy Valley) is highly revered. It gushes forth in the heart of a cedar forest and mountainside near Bsherrih. Another famous valley is the Valley of Adonis, through which the River of Adonis flows; and to where the pilgrimage of Adonis took place in the spring of the year.

See Gods, Pagan. In the Bible, Lebanon is celebrated in various capacities. It is frequently featured in the Old Testament, in a general way, as the northern boundary of Palestine (Deut. 1:24; Josh. 1:4), dividing it from Phoenicia and Syria. Its imposing range was emblematic of natural strength and solidarity, therefore a perfect poetic foil to the majesty of God revealed in a thunderstorm so powerful that it “maketh them to skip like a calf” (Ps 29:6). It was a proverbially lush land, noted for its magnificent forests (Isa. 60:13), especially the “cedars of Lebanon” (Judg. 9:15; Isa. 2:13). For the tree-poor Palestinians, Lebanon’s cedars symbolized the ultimate in natural wealth and beauty. The psalmist calls these ancient and beautiful cedars the “trees of the Lord ... which He hath planted” (Ps. 104:16). It is said that some of the cedars remaining in Lebanon are at least 2,500 years old. They share with the famous redwoods of California the distinction of being the oldest living things on earth. Cedars, as well as other woods of Lebanon, were used in great abundance in the construction of David’s palace and Solomon’s Temple and palace buildings (1 Kings 5:10-18; 7:2). Cedar was obtained also for the building of the second Temple or the Temple of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:7). The forests of Lebanon have been victims of human greed and irresponsibility. They were exploited by Egypt and Mesopotamia long before biblical times, and they continued to supply precious timber well into the Roman Era. Under the Ottoman Empire (A.D. 1516), the forest almost entirely disappeared. Today there is not much left of the cedar woods; almost all of them are gone. The olive tree also played an important part in ancient times and is still cultivated. Tyre to which Ezekiel 27-28 is devoted, was one of the most famous cities of the ancient world. Along with the older port of Sidon, it was one of the centers of Phoenician civilization. See Phoenicia. Many foreign powers have controlled the Phoenician city-states. They include, in order of rule, the Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered Lebanon. The region came under the control of the Roman Empire in 64 B.C. (Philip Lee, Holman’s PC Bible Dictionary).

3. Verses 5-6: “He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed *it* by great waters, *and* set it *as* a willow tree. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.”
 - a. We are told in verse twelve that this eagle represents the king of Babylon. He had already mastered Judah, taking the king and the royal seed into Babylon (cf. Dan. 1). Those taken into captivity were not slain there, but were preserved. The reference, as will be developed in the next section of the chapter, is to Jehoiachin and the royal seed.
 - b. In the parable, the eagle took from the land (of Israel) the seed of the land, which he planted by the waters, in the land of Judah. The seed produced a spreading vine, the branches of which turned toward the eagle; it was rooted and thus was able to grow and produce branches and sprigs.
 - c. The growing plant that was produced by the seed which the eagle planted, represents the remainder of the nation of Judah. It was allowed to continue, being bound to Babylon. The vine (Judah) turned toward the eagle (Babylon). This represents “the fealty of Zedekiah as a vassal looking up to Nebuchadnezzar, to whom Judah owed its peace and very existence as a separate state” (JFB, p.261).
 4. Verses 7-10: “There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. Yea, behold, *being* planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.”
 - a. Following the death of Jehoikim, his son Jehoiachin (also known as Jechoniah and Coniah) took the throne in Judah. His reign lasted a brief three months. Zedekiah, the uncle of Jehoiachin and brother
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of Jehoiakim became king in 597 B.C. During his eleventh year on the throne, the Babylonians came back to Jerusalem, conquered the city, destroyed the temple, and took Zedekiah into captivity. See 2 Kings 24-25. Before this disaster, in a vain attempt to free himself from the control of Babylon, Zedekiah cultivated friendship with Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

- b. The second great eagle represents the king of Egypt, with whom Zedekiah had made alliance. This eagle came into the land; the vine which grew from the seed planted by the first eagle, turned toward the second eagle. Zedekiah aligned his kingdom with the Egyptians, thinking that with Egypt as an ally, he would be able to throw off the yoke of Babylon.
 - 1) 2 Kings 24:20: "For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon."
 - 2) Ezekiel 17:15: "But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such *things*? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?"
 - c. Ezekiel is told to ask the house of Israel whether the vine would prosper. What would the first great eagle do? Would he not pull up the vine by its roots, taking the fruit thereof, and allowing the vine to wither and die? The Lord affirms that Judah would not prosper, that she would be uprooted and her wealth robbed, and she as a nation would die.
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KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

ISRAEL				JUDAH			
KING	REIGNED	YEARS	KIND	KING	REIGNED	YEARS	KIND
Jeroboam	22 years	933-911	Bad	Rehoboam	17 years	933-916	Not Good
Nadab	2 years	911-910	Bad	Abijah	3 years	915-913	Not Good
Baasha	24 years	910-887	Bad	Asa	41 years	912-872	Good
Elah	2 years	887-886	Bad	Jehoshaphat	25 years	874-850	Good
Zimri	7 days	886	Bad	Jehoram	8 years	850-843	Bad
Omri	12 years	886-875	Very Bad	Ahaziah	1 year	843	Bad
Ahab	22 years	875-854	Very Bad	Athaliah	6 years	843-837	Wicked
Ahaziah	2 years	855-854	Bad	Joash	40 years	843-803	Not Bad
Joram	12 years	854-843	Bad	Amaziah	19 years	803-775	Not Bad
Jehu	28 years	843-816	Not Good	Uzziah	52 years	787-735	Good
Jehoahaz	17 years	820-804	Bad	Jotham	16 years	749-734	Good
Joash	16 years	806-790	Bad	Ahaz	16 years	741-726	Bad
Jeroboam	41 years	790-748	Bad	Hezekiah	29 years	726-697	Good
Zechariah	6 months	748	Bad	Manasseh	55 years	697-642	Bad
Shallum	1 month	748	Bad	Amon	2 years	641-640	Bad
Menahem	10 years	748-738	Bad	Josiah	31 years	639-608	Good
Pekahiah	2 years	738-736	Bad	Jehoahaz	3 months	608	Bad
Pekah	20 years	748-730	Bad	Jehoiakim	11 years	608-597	Bad
Hoshea	9 years	730-721	Bad	Jehoiachin	3 months	597	Bad
				Zedekiah	11 years	597-586	Bad

* The names, dates, and years in the table were taken from *Halley's Bible Handbook*, pp.194f.

B. Ezekiel 17:11-21: The Meaning of the Parable.

1. Verses 11-14: “Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these *things mean?* tell *them*, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jeru-salem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land: That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, *but* that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.”
 - a. The rebellious people of Jerusalem are to be reminded that the king of Babylon has already been to the city and took away captivities, including the king and princes. Those of royal bloodline have been captivated. Other mighty men from the land were likewise enslaved.
 - b. The king’s seed who was allowed to occupy the throne of Judah (Zedekiah) had been obliged to enter into a covenant with the Babylonian king. He had been forced to swear loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. His kingdom was thereby relegated to servitude to the Babylonian king. This is a plain statement of the meaning of the vine that Nebuchadnezzar had planted, which was of low stature, the branches of which had turned toward the Babylonians.
 2. Verses 15-17: “But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such *things?* or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place *where* the king *dwelleth* that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, *even* with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. Neither shall Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons.”
 - a. Zedekiah had sent ambassadors to the king of Egypt, to work out an agreement by which Pharaoh would send horses and soldiers to overthrow the rule of the Babylonians. The Lord asked whether this plan would be allowed to prosper. Would he be able to break the covenant under which he was held by Nebuchadnezzar? Jamieson (p.262) cites an ancient source which said “that the whole region from Thebes to Memphis was filled with royal stalls, so that 20,000 chariots, with two horses in each, could be furnished for war.”
 - b. The Lord states in strong terms that Zedekiah would die in the midst of Babylon. His scheme to cast off the Chaldean yoke would utterly fail. God would see to it. Earlier, Ezekiel had been moved to affirm that Zedekiah would die in Babylon, but that he would never see the city (Ezek. 12:13). His eyes were put out when he fell into the hands of the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:7).
 - c. Pharaoh and his army would be unable to erect defenses for Jerusalem against the Babylonians; but the Babylonians would erect them against Jerusalem. God had decreed the fall of Judah and ordered the bondage of Zedekiah. There was no power on earth that could prevent his designs.
 3. Verses 18-21: “Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these *things*, he shall not escape. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; *As* I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it.*”
 - a. The Lord regards the rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar as an act of insurrection against himself. The king had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Babylonian king, and had thus entered into a covenant with him. God was behind the power of Babylon, in its punishment of Judah.
 - b. Zedekiah and his people were obligated to serve God, but they had repudiated their duty to serve him. The Lord was sending the Babylonians against Zedekiah and Judah in punishment for their long rebellion against his Law; when the king renounced the agreement they had entered into with the king
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of Babylon, they were further rebelling against God. He would spread his net over them, thus ensnaring them, without any hope of escape.

- c. Those who surrounded King Zedekiah would be scattered and slain. When the king and his men tried to slip out of Jerusalem at the end of the siege, they were soon caught; Zedekiah was forced to see his sons put to death just before his eyes were put out (2 Kings 25).
- d. When all of these things came to pass, they would then perceive the fact that God is in charge; his will is always to be done, regardless of the efforts of mankind to thwart it. These judgments against Zedekiah and his people would amount to God pleading with them to see the error of their ways. "Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek. 20:36).

C. Ezekiel 17:22-24: God Will Do Some Cropping.

1. Verses 22-23: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set *it*; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant *it* upon an high mountain and eminent. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell."
 - a. A promise of hope is given to Israel. God states that he will take the top-most branch of the high cedar, and will plant in on a high and eminent mountain. This branch will grow, bringing forth both boughs and fruit; its branches would become a haven for birds, and would provide shade for those who sought it. As Nebuchadnezzar would take the top twig from the figurative cedar tree (Judah) and plant it in Babylon, so the Lord would replant that cedar tree by reversing the process.
 - b. The high mountain referred to in verse 23 is Zion. The promise of hope has two fulfillments: (1) the people would be allowed to return home to Canaan and (2) there is a Messianic fulfillment.
 2. Verse 24: "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done *it*."
 - a. The result of God's actions in fulfilling the promise of the passage would convince those who beheld this work that the God of heaven was the one who did it.
 - b. God was able to bring down the kingdom of Judah, because of their rebellion against his Law. He was able also to bring down the mighty Babylonian Empire, and exalt the Israelites again. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, God began to bring his people back into their own land.
 - c. There seems to be a definite Messianic ring to the passage (17:22-24).
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EZEKIEL 18

A. Ezekiel 18:1-9: The Guilty Soul Will Die and the Obedient Soul Shall Live.

1. Verses 1-3: "The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? *As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.*"
 - a. "O how men manipulate God! O the images we create of him! From the days of the ancients, men have had their gods of love and fertility, productivity and prosperity, protection and war, to serve their special needs and interests. Some still know God only as an astute business partner responsible for productivity and prosperity, and they name their business for him. To some he is a body guard; to others he is a health-care-giver; to others he is a grand old man to be pampered, but whose ideas are as outdated as the old worn-out rocker in which he whiles away the hours. But, God a judge? Few moderns view God as Judge" (Mack Lyon, MSOP, p.186).
 - b. The prophet is directed to speak this message to the people, inquiring why they used the proverb that follows: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The meaning of the proverb is clear: The sour grapes eaten by their forebears are the sins they practiced, the effect of which was brought to bear on the present generation. In other words, the generation then on the scene was being punished for the sins committed by their forefathers. They were not guilty of the sins committed by their fathers, but they suffered the consequences of those sin: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:4-6). As will soon be pointed out, only the offenders are guilty of sin.
 - c. These present Israelites were complaining because God was doing to them, what he forbade them to do to their children. "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16). They thought that God was punishing them for the sins done by their parents and grandparents; in reality, they thought, God was being inconsistent by forbidding them to punish the son for a crime done by the father, but doing the same thing to them. Hey charge, "The way of the Lord is not equal" (18:29).
 - d. Sin has consequences which are felt even by innocent parties. A father becomes a drunkard, wastes the family income on liquor, and the wife and children suffer. A mother is unfaithful to her husband, and the husband and children are forced to get by without the aid of a loving mother.
 - 1) Exodus 20:5: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me."
 - 2) Exodus 34:7: "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*."
 - e. "They argued that Manasseh and his generation had sinned, and Josiah and his kin along with their contemporaries were having to suffer for it. The prophet was hearing it with his own ears from the lips of his own people. They were saying, 'The way of the Lord is not equal...vv. 25 and 29). The ill effects of a wicked generation are sometimes felt as far as the third and fourth generations" (Lyon, MSOP, pp.186f).
 - 1) Thirty years ago, the politicians enacted welfare programs that have mushroomed into such huge

- money-eating machines that future generations of American will be hard-pressed to keep up the payment on the loans which were made to finance the programs. An infant born to a woman who is addicted to drugs must bear the consequences of his mother's sinful habit. These are the consequences which naturally follow, and are not incurred because of any sin on the victim's part.
- 2) The complaint of these present-generation Israelites was an effort to justify their own sins. It was true that Manasseh had led the nation into idolatry; it is also true that Josiah tried to turn them all back to the way of God; moreover, it is also true that they had participated personally in the rebellion. Regardless of how guilty their forebears had been, they themselves were also guilty, and the punishment was being sent upon them for their sins. They could have repented at any time.
 - f. Ezekiel's work at this point in the book is to show the people their own personal responsibility for the evil of which they had been guilty. He rebukes them for their unwillingness to acknowledge their own culpability. God was not unjust in sending them into Babylonian exile. "He does a powerful job, and while doing it, he delivers a timely message to our generation living in the postmodern twentieth-century society on the brink of national disaster, unwilling to be held accountable for its gross immoralities and rejection of Jehovah" (Lyon, MSOP, p.188).
 - g. The Lord states bluntly that they would have no occasion to use that proverb any more in Israel. He was to expose their own sins with such clarity, and reveal God's standard of judgment so clearly that they could not fail to see the truth, and would be forced to admit their guilt.
2. Verse 4: "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die."
 - a. God, the Creator, does not answer to man, the created. All souls belong to him who made them. God is the Father and maker of our spirits. Because God is God, he can be trusted to do only that which is right; he will not act arbitrarily or with prejudice; he is not a respecter of persons.
 - 1) Zechariah 12:1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and **formeth the spirit of man within him.**"
 - 2) Hebrews 12:9: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the **Father of spirits**, and live?"
 - 3) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - b. The soul that sinneth will suffer the penalty prescribed, which is death. What kind of death is meant? To answer this, we must understand what is meant by *soul*. The word is sometimes used in reference to people (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20). The most prominent use of the word in the Scriptures is in reference to the spirit, the eternal part of each human. Those people then in exile were being punished for their sins; but they had not been executed physically. A soul (spirit) dies when it is cut off from God, the only source of life; spiritual death occurs when sin is committed (Gen. 2:16-17). The moment Adam and Eve transgressed God's commandment, they died spiritually (1 John 3:4). If one dies (physically) in that condition, he will experience eternal death (separation throughout eternity from God, Rev. 2:11; 20:14; 21:8). It is spiritual death (and eventual eternal death) that is being discussed (not physical death).
 - c. Exodus 32:32-33: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." "We are amazed at the scholars who make an ellipsis (an incomplete sentence) out of this. All it needs is proper punctuation....Punctuation is altogether a human thing, anyway; and we have as much right to punctuate it accurately, as others do to make an ellipsis out of it by leaving out a comma!" (Coffman, *Commentary on Exodus*, p.449). Moses simply asks God to
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forgive the people; if not, Moses asks God to blot him out of the book of life in place of the people.

3. Verses 5-9: "But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, *And* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, *And* hath not oppressed any, *but* hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; He *that* hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, *that* hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he *is* just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. The righteous man will not die (vs. 9). This would not be a true statement if the death in the context is physical death. Spiritual death is the death under discussion. The conditions listed in the passage insured his spiritual life, not his physical life. Even innocent babies and godly adults experience physical death. But one can be alive in the flesh and dead in the spirit: "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6).
 - b. The conditions for retaining spiritual life include being just (righteous); living a lawful and righteous life. This includes treating others fairly; it especially requires obedience to God's commands (which is to work righteousness).
 - 1) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
 - 2) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - 3) Acts 10:35: "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - c. Another condition is a refusal to eat upon the mountains. Idol worship was conducted on high places and mountains. Idolaters offered sacrifices which were then eaten at the high places. To lose one's spiritual life was to worship an idol and eat at its shrine.
 - d. Another condition for spiritual life was to refuse to cast the eyes in worship upon any of the idols that abounded in Israel.
 - e. The man who defiles his neighbors wife or "comes near to" a menstruous woman contaminates himself by so doing, and dies spiritually.
 - f. In verse seven other conditions are given which pertain to how one treated his fellowman. He must not oppress anyone; he must restore the pledge to one in his debt (Ex. 22:26-26; Deut. 24:6-13); he must not have done violence to others; he must have been willing to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. To follow these conditions would contribute toward spiritual life; a failure resulted in death.
 - g. Verse eight adds other conditions for a righteous man under the Mosaic Law: he was not to charge usury (Deut 23:20; Ex. 22:24) or interest (Lev. 25:36-37); he was not to take part in any perversion of justice, but render true justice when acting as judge or mediator between other parties.
 - h. Verse nine states, in summary, that if he has walked in harmony with God's statutes, being obedient to God's laws, he is just and would live; he had the Lord's word on the matter.

B. Ezekiel 18:10-20: Sin is not Inherited from the Parent.

1. Verses 10-13: "If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood, and *that* doeth the like to *any* one of these *things*, *And* that doeth not any of those *duties*, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife, Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these

abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.”

- a. The character and practices of a righteous man are delineated in the preceding verses; in this passage Ezekiel introduces the case of a righteous man who has a son. In the case he envisions, the righteous man has a son who is a robber, a killer, and does what he pleases in regards to the conditions of righteousness listed above (verses 5-9). This rebellious son violates all of the conditions.
 - b. The Lord asks, “Shall such a man as this wicked son live?” He answers the question by saying that he would not live. He violated the will of God in all of those particulars, and therefore he shall die (spiritually). He cannot lay the blame for his guilt on his father or anyone else; he has personally done the evil and must personally face the penalty for his own sins.
2. Verses 14-18: “Now, lo, *if* he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, *That* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, *but* hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, *That* hath taken off his hand from the poor, *that* hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. *As for* his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did *that* which *is* not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity.”
- a. In this passage, the inspired writer brings up the case of the rebellious son (of the previous passage) having a son; this is the grandson of the righteous man of verses 5-9.
 - b. This third man sees the evils of his father’s life, and does not follow his way. Rather, he resolves to follow the righteous way of his grandfather. The Lord enumerates the various conditions given in verses 5-9, and states that this man heeded these, and then says that this man shall not die for the iniquity of his father, but he would surely live.
3. Verses 19-20: “Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, *and* hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”
- a. The Israelites thought that this righteous son ought to bear the iniquity of his father, the rebellious son of the righteous man. But he has done right; he has kept God’s law; therefore he shall live.
 - b. Stating the precept of the chapter once again, God declares that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Judgment is passed on individuals; each will be blessed or punished according to the nature of his own works.
 - 1) Isaiah 3:10-11: "Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be ill with him*: for the reward of his hands shall be given him."
 - 2) Matthew 21:28-31: "But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."
 - 3) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one
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of us shall give account of himself to God."

- 4) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - c. The son shall **not** bear the iniquity of his father. The guilt the father has incurred will not be placed on the soul of the son. The guilt the son has incurred will not be placed on the soul of the father. In the case of the context, the grandfather will be blessed for his own righteous conduct; neither his son nor grandson will receive the reward intended for the grandfather on account of his obedience.
 - d. The righteousness of the one who is righteous pertains to him who is righteous; the wickedness of the one who is wicked will be upon him who is wicked.
 - e. In view of these basic truths of God's word, we are in a position to pass judgment on Calvinism, which asserts the doctrine of inherited depravity. They teach that the guilt of Adam's sins passed on down to his children, their children, and on to every succeeding generation; we are all guilty of the sins of the first man. This passage denies that doctrine. Since we cannot inherit the sin of the parent, from whom do we inherit the guilt of sin? If any is inherited at all, it must come to us from God! But that is unthinkable! It follows, therefore, that no one inherits the guilt of sin from anyone; he accrues guilt only when he personally violates God's word. The soul that sinneth, **IT** shall die.
4. Verses 21-23: "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his trans-gressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live?"
 - a. Is there any hope for the wicked man? Not as long as he remains in his wicked way of life. But he can change. If the wicked person will turn away from all of his sins, and keep all of God's statutes, he shall live and not die. Just because he had started out in life going in the wrong direction does not mean he must always continue that way.
 - b. If he repudiates all of his sinful ways, and will obey all that God requires, he can live. But he is obligated to quit all sin and do all that God requires.
 - 1) Matthew 4:4: "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
 - 2) James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
 - c. The transgressions he has committed will not be mentioned against him, provided he truly repents. Again God mentions the fact that he must be obedient to all of God's word. Partial obedience is not sufficient.
 - d. By a rhetorical question, God teaches that he has no pleasure in the death of any soul. It is his will that every sinful person should turn to the true ways and live.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 5:29: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"
 - 2) 1 Timothy 2:4: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
 - 3) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - e. "A preacher does his congregation no favors who preaches only the goodness of God to the neglect of his severity. In doing so, he has carved for himself, and for them, an image of God that is
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unbiblical, untruthful, and unreal. He has carved out an idol image as much as if he were skillfully carved from silver or stone or wood and erected on an altar before the congregation. It is a self-serving false god. It is idolatry" (Lyon, MSOP, p.191). "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee. 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" (Rom. 11:19-22).

5. Verse 24: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."
 - a. What about the righteous man who turns away from his righteous way of life, and begins to live in rebellion to God's word?
 - b. In this case, all the righteousness that man had previously done will not be mentioned; his trespasses will override his former righteousness. He has sinned and will die.

C. Ezekiel 18:25-32: God Does Not Want to Punish Anyone.

1. Verses 25-26: "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous *man* turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die."
 - a. The Israelites had charged God with being unequal; God replies that it is their ways that are unequal. God was where he had always been; it was they who had moved. God treats his offspring with equity; he shows partiality toward no one. The punishment with which the Israelites were so displeased was a demonstration of their own sinfulness; it did not reflect any inconsistency on God's part.
 - b. When a righteous man turns away from his righteous life, and commits iniquity, he dies on account of his lawlessness. It is not God's fault.
 2. Verses 27-29: "Again, when the wicked *man* turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die."
 - a. Once again, the Lord affirms that if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness, and does that which is lawful and right, his soul shall live.
 - b. Because he has been willing and able to repent and follow God's way, he shall deliver his soul and live. God has always dealt with mankind on the basis of individual responsibility; we have the power of choice; we will be blessed if we choose right, and punished for making the wrong decisions.
 3. Verses 29-30: "Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."
 - a. Once again, Jehovah refers to the charge the Israelites had hurled against him, that he was being inconsistent in his treatment of them; he replies to their charge that it is their ways that are unequal.
 - b. Because they were disobedient, God would judge them. They had the opportunity to repent and make the proper adjustments to their lives, and be able to preserve their souls. But they must turn away from all of their iniquity, to avoid ruin. The decision was theirs.
 - c. What is being said applies to those Israelites already in captivity and to those who remained in the land. There was hope for them only if they repented. Perhaps it was too late to prevent the overthrow
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of their beloved city, but it was not too late for them to have their souls saved.

4. Verses 31-32: “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.”
 - a. They are told to cast aside all of their transgressions, and obtain a new heart and a new spirit. "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them" (Jer. 32:39). To have the new heart and new spirit, they must make a great change in their attitude and practice. To this point they had lived to serve themselves; they must reverse that entire frame of mind and dedicate themselves to serving the will of God.
 - b. The choice is theirs. If they died, it will be their fault. God does not desire their spiritual death; he wants them to be saved. But they must make the right choice!
 - c. In verse thirty-two, God reveals the tender heart he has for his offspring. He does not want to see them die; he does want them to turn away from their evil ways and live.
 - d. 2 Peter 3:8-13: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."
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EZEKIEL 19

A. Ezekiel 19:1-9: Lamentation for the Fall of Judah.

1. Verses 1-4: "Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, And say, What *is* thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt."
 - a. Ezekiel is directed to proclaim a lamentation in behalf of the princes of Israel. The princes are the kings, with two specifically described by the text. In the figures used in the lamentation, the mother is the nation of Israel; the other lionesses, among whom the mother (the lioness) of Israel's princes lay down, were the kings of Gentile nations.
 - b. The lioness reared her young to be like the other kings in surrounding kingdoms. One of her young offspring is taught to catch prey and devour men. "This whelp learned the ways of the world, the ways of wicked and ruthless kings and exercised them. This is believed to be a reference to Jehoahaz because of what follows in verse four....After a brief reign of only three months, Jehoahaz (Shallum) was taken captive to Egypt by Pharaoh-Necho..." (Lyon, MSOP, p.194).
 - c. 2 Kings 23:31-34: "Jehoahaz *was* twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaohnechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. And Pharaohnechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there." See also 2 Chronicles 36:1-4.
 2. Verses 5-7: "Now when she saw that she had waited, *and* her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, *and* made him a young lion. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, *and* devoured men. And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring."
 - a. The lioness, perceiving that the hope she had in the first whelp had been misplaced, she chose another from her offspring. But this one likewise lay down among the lions, and followed the practices of his predecessor in learning to catch prey and devour men. He manifested a ferocious demeanor.
 - b. Each of the two princes (kings of Judah) had become like the rulers of the heathen kingdoms. The first had been taken in chains into Egypt; and the wicked ways of the second would doom him to a similar fate. This second king was Jehoiachin, who ruled in Judah only for three months, just as Jehoahaz's reign had been limited to three months.
 - c. 2 Kings 24:8-16: "Jehoiachin *was* eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name *was* Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, *even* ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and
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smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, *those* carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And all the men of might, *even* seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all *that were* strong *and* apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."

- d. Ezekiel included Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin in this prophecy, skipping over Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim died at Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:1-6). The king described was one who was taken by Babylon (verse 9). "Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22:18-19).
3. Verses 8-9: "Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel."
 - a. Jehoiachin was exiled to Babylon at the time Ezekiel was carried there. "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity" (Ezek. 1:1-2).
 - b. Some scholars think that the second king considered is Zedekiah, because he was taken to Babylon, "but since there seems to be pretty general agreement that Zedekiah has his own lamentation in the next section, it is more probably Jehoiachin. The description of his capture, 'They put him in ward in chains (in a cage) and brought him to the king of Babylon' (v.9), is said to be in keeping with the way captive kings were actually treated" (Lyon, MSOP, p.194).

B. Ezekiel 19:10-14: Destruction of the Kingdom and Banishment of the People.

1. Verses 10-12: "Thy mother *is* like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters. And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them."
 - a. Ezekiel 19:10-12: "'Your mother *was* like a vine in your bloodline, Planted by the waters, Fruitful and full of branches Because of many waters. She had strong branches for scepters of rulers. She towered in stature above the thick branches, And was seen in her height amid the dense foliage. But she was plucked up in fury, She was cast down to the ground, And the east wind dried her fruit. Her strong branches were broken and withered; The fire consumed them" (NKJ).
 - b. "From the lamentable fate of the princes transported to Egypt and Babylon, the ode passes to a description of the fate, which the lion-like rapacity of the princes is preparing for the kingdom and people. Israel resembled a vine planted by the water" (Keil, Vol. I, p.261). Regarding the phrase, "a vine in thy blood," Keil says: "For neither of the other renderings, 'in thy blood' and 'in thy likeness,' yields a suitable meaning" (p.262).
 - c. The vine that grew by the waters was fruitful and produced strong branches. The branches produced strong scepters for the kings. "This vine sent out strong shoots for rulers' sceptres; that is to say, it brought forth powerful kings, and grew up to a great height...." (Keil, Vol. I, p.262).
 - d. Despite the great size and strength of the vine, she was plucked up by the fury of God's wrath, and cast down to the ground, where the east wind dried up her fruit and her strong branches were broken. This is a figurative picture of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah. The glorious years Israel had enjoyed during the days of David and Solomon were long in the past; that past glory could not

preserve her from the destruction God must bring upon her for her rebellion.

2. Verses 13-14: “And now she *is* planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, *which* hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod *to be* a sceptre to rule. This *is* a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.”
 - a. In the picture Ezekiel gives here, the vine is now planted in the dry and thirsty ground of the wilderness. “The uprooting ends in the transplanting of the vine into a waste, dry, unwatered land—in other words, in the transplanting of the people, Israel, into exile. The dry land is Babylon, so described as being a barren soil in which the kingdom of God could not flourish” (Keil, Vol. I, p.262).
 - b. “According to ver. 14, this catastrophe is occasioned by the princes. The fire, which devours the fruit of the vine so that it cannot send out any more branches, emanates...from the shoot of its branches, *i.e.* from its branches, which are so prolific in shoots” (Keil, Vol. I, pp.262f).
 - c. “The picture from ver. 12 onwards is prophetic. The tearing up of the vine, and its transplantation into a dry land, had already commenced with the carrying away of Jechoniah; but it was not completed till the destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away of Zedekiah, which were still in the future at the time when these words were uttered” (Keil, Vol. I, p.263).
 - d. The prophet notes that the words of this chapter formed a lamentation, and were given for that very purpose. So certain was the punishment God intended, that they could already begin singing the lament. The nation had departed from Egypt under the leadership of Moses with the greatest of expectations, but soon after entering the wilderness, when the way became difficult, they began to complain and rebel. They were warned through the forty years in the wilderness against rebellion. When the nation entered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, with a new generation now comprising the nation, they entered with great expectations, but before long, again their faith began to wane. Their history as given in the book of Judges is one which graphically portrays their inconsistent conduct.
 - e. They had been properly warned against doing the very things they did: "For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any *thing* in it; a land whose stones *are* iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt *therein*; And *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, *wherein were* fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where *there was* no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:7-17).
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EZEKIEL 20

A. Ezekiel 20:1-8: Ezekiel is to Judge Israel.

1. Verse 1: "And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, the tenth *day* of the month, *that* certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me."
 - a. During the seventh year of Jechoniah's (and Ezekiel's) captivity, on the tenth day of the fifth month, the elders came to him to make inquiry of the Lord.
 - 1) This was two years, one month and five days after Ezekiel was called to the prophetic office. "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity" (Ezek. 1:1-2).
 - 2) This was eleven months and five days after the time of Ezekiel 8:1: "And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *as* I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me."
 - b. The elders were civil leaders in Israel. They were the various heads of tribal families. The chief priests of the New Testament, were the leaders of the twenty-four orders of Levitical priests.
 - c. These elders came to Ezekiel to obtain some information from God. In Ezekiel 14, elders came to the prophet, but God told the prophet they they had set up idols in their heart, and that he would not accept any inquiry they made of him (14:3).
 2. Verses 2-4: "Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye come to inquire of me? *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge *them*? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers."
 - a. God refused to listen to anything the elders (in Ezek. 14) asked; he repeated this decision in this text. We are not told what they wanted to ask; it likely pertained to the dilemma of captivity they now endured.
 - b. The prophet is directed to judge them, and cause them to understand the abominations of their fathers. "Instead of spending time in *teaching* them, tell them of the abominations of their fathers, of which their own are the complement and counterpart, and which call for *judgment* (JFB, p.272).
 - c. "The prophet is to revert to the sins of the fathers, not merely for the purpose of exhibiting the magnitude of the people's guilt, but also to hold up before the sinners themselves, the patience and long-suffering which have hitherto been displayed by the Lord" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.265f).
 3. Verses 5-8: "And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I *am* the LORD your God; In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands: Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt."
 - a. Ezekiel is to remind them that God had chosen their forefathers as his special nation while they were in slavery to the Egyptians. His choice was not made because of any strength inherent in them, or on account of their numeric size.
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- 1) Deuteronomy 7:7: "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people."
- 2) God had before selected the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, to be his people. "And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I *am* the LORD" (Ex. 6:8).
- b. However, those people were not worthy of their exalted status with Jehovah. They rebelled against God soon after leaving the land of their slavery. Through the centuries, they were known more for their sinfulness than for their godliness.
 - 1) Psalms 144:8: "Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood."
 - 2) Even while many of their national brethren were in Babylonian captivity, those remaining in the land continued their abominable ways: "So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about" (Ezek. 18:10).
- c. God called on them to give up the idols toward which they inclined; they were instructed in the folly of idolatry; they had seen numerous demonstrations of the mighty works of the Almighty, their God; they had been recipients of many providential provisions of the Lord; they had been warned against turning away from his Law; and they had been punished many times for their frequent rebellions.
- d. But they still had difficulty learning the lesson! Many individuals were righteous; and there were times when the nation as a whole was on the straight and narrow; but the time always came when they would allow themselves to be led astray.
- e. Their present condition was tracable directly to their rebellion against Jehovah. They could blame only themselves.
 - 1) Joshua 24:14-15: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
 - 2) Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*."

B. Ezekiel 20:9-17: Israel's Rebellion Deserved Death in the Wilderness.

1. Verses 9-12: "But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they *were*, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify them."
 - a. God took action that his name should not be sullied among the heathen, therefore he brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, intending to give them a separate land which would provide for their material needs, while protecting them from the evil influences of constant contact with idolaters.
 - 1) The land itself would give them an isolated location, and keep them generally separated from pagan civilizations. On the east, they were protected by the desert; to the west lay the Mediterranean Sea [invasion by sea was not a significant threat]. Only from the north and south could Palestine be entered.
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- 2) When God led them into Palestine, he directed that they exterminate all the pagan occupants of that good land. This fate had been more than earned by those wicked people, who had been given time to change from their evil ways, but would not. If Israel had followed God's orders completely, they would have prevented an untold amount of misery for future generations. But their dedication to prosecuting the war against the heathen waned, and they allowed a large number of them to remain in the land.
 - 3) God gave them a Law, a code which far surpassed anything man could have drawn up by his own ingenuity. "For what nation *is there so great*, who *hath God so nigh unto them*, as the LORD our God *is in all things that we call upon him for?*" (Deut. 4:7). Again, if they had kept the Law as they were told, God would have continued his rich blessings upon them, and they could have had a wonderful life in that land of plenty.
- b. God gave to them the sabbaths, which was a sign between himself and Israel; they could know by what God did in their behalf, that he had set them apart to be a holy nation; they knew what was expected of them, that they were to give their full devotions to him. "Even though the text says 'sabbaths,' it is clear that the weekly sabbath, the seventh day is meant (cf. Exod. 31:12-17). This day was given to a particular people in commemoration of the creation. On the seventh day God finished his work which he had made (Gen. 2:2). He blessed it and sanctified (set apart) it (v.3). To the Israelites alone the sabbath was given. No Gentile ever received it (cf. Exod. 20:2-3). The Genesis account (2:3) says God 'sanctified' the sabbath,' but when did its observance begin? This unique day is unknown to Israel before 'God came down upon mount Sinai and made it known to them' (Neh. 9:13-14). It is clear, therefore, that the sabbath was not observed prior to Sinai. More important is the fact that New Testament Christians are under no obligation to 'keep the Sabbath.' The first day of the week (Sunday) is the day Christians are authorized to remember (cf. Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2)" (Hackworth, MSOP, pp.205f).
- 1) Deuteronomy 5:3: "The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even us*, who *are all of us here alive this day.*"
 - 2) Deuteronomy 5:15: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."
 - 3) Nehemiah 9:13-14: "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant."
 - 4) Colossians 2:14-17: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ."
2. Verses 13-14: "But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out."
- a. In the wilderness, Israel rebelled against God on many occasions. Soon after receiving the Law at Mt. Sinai, they were told to send spies into the land, preparatory to their entry. Ten of the twelve spies came back with a negative report, and convinced the people that they would be unable to wrest the land from the Canaanites. Despite the strong appeal by Joshua and Caleb that the land could be taken, with
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God's help, provided they did their part, the nation was swayed by the evil report of the majority. This doomed them to remain in the wilderness until that generation died; only Joshua and Caleb of that generation were allowed to enter Canaan.

- b. So strong was their rebellion, God wanted to destroy them. He even proposed to Moses that he would slay them all, and build another nation from among the descendants of Moses. That great man pleaded with the Lord to refrain from such a course. "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night" (Num. 14:11-14).
3. Verses 15-17: "Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given *them*, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands; Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness."
 - a. The rebellious Israelites deserved to be destroyed in the wilderness, but God's commitment to his great plan to exalt the descendants of Abraham, and through them to bring the Messiah into the world, and his longsuffering nature, granted to them the right to live.
 - b. God could have abandoned them to their own fate in the wilderness, but he did not; he could have excluded them from the land of Canaan perpetually, but he allowed them to enter and gain control of that wonderful location.
 - c. The richness of the land's productivity is illustrated by the huge size of a cluster of grapes the twelve spies brought back. "And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and *they brought* of the pomegranates, and of the figs" (Num. 13:23).

C. Ezekiel 20:18-26: The Generation that Came to Age in the Wilderness also Rebelled.

1. Verses 18-20: "But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I *am* the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God."
 - a. The generation that came to maturity in the wilderness was not immune to apostasy. Generally, the off-spring of rebellious parents will also rebel. A preacher visited in the home of a couple whose son was most unruly. The parents apologized, saying that they could do nothing with him, and that he was a "little devil." The preacher replied, "Generally speaking, a little devil is the offspring of a bigger devil."
 - b. God advised the younger generation to avoid the errors of their parents; he counseled them to walk in his statutes, to keep and perform his judgments, and to hallow his sabbaths, which were given as a sign between God and Israel.
 2. Verses 21-23: "Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries."
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- a. God warned this younger generation against rebellion; he directed them to walk in his statutes, to keep his judgments, and remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Despite the warnings and instructions, they followed the pattern established by their fathers. This rebellion was seen more in the generation that grew up in the land, than among those who conquered Canaan. "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel" (Judges 2:10).
 - b. The generation that came from the wilderness into Canaan was far more faithful than their parents. For a period of time, they zealously followed the Lord's will, and were enabled to take control of the promised land. Their faithfulness regarding the capture of Jericho is one of their high points, but that victory was quickly followed by the debacle at Ai, a severe defeat occasioned by the sin of Achan at Jericho.
 - c. Because of their sins, God lifted up his hand to scatter them among the heathen and disperse them through the various countries. He was in the very process of doing that very thing now, after enduring centuries of their rebellion. Twice the Babylonians had invaded the land, killing many and enslaving many others. One final time they would come against Jerusalem, this time to destroy the temple and city, killing many more of the rebels, and taking many others into captivity. Years earlier, in 721 B.C., the ten tribes of the northern kingdom had been conquered and enslaved by the Assyrians.
3. Verses 24-26: "Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were* not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I *am* the LORD."
- a. The present generation was like that first generation that came out of Egypt. While there were notable exceptions, the general practice of the Israelites was one of rebellion.
 - b. God declares that these rebels were guilty of four great sins:
 - 1) They despised his statutes.
 - 2) They did not execute his judgments.
 - 3) They polluted his sabbaths.
 - 4) Their eyes were after their fathers' idols.
 - c. How did God *give* them "statutes that were not good?" One way to "give" something to someone is to allow that item to come upon them. When they had shown their determination to do that with which they had filled their heart, he let them have their way, to their own ruin. He did a similar thing to the Gentiles.
 - 1) Acts 7:41-43: "And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of* forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon."
 - 2) Romans 1:24,26,28: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves....For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature...."And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."
 - d. God allowed them to suffer the consequences of their own foolish practices. One of man's greatest liabilities is pride; he thinks he knows what is best for him; he desires to please himself. The danger
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of this is illustrated in the case of Israel, and of countless individuals. God has warned us repeatedly of this folly (Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23). The most lasting lessons we learn, and the most painful, are those that come from bitter experience. Israel wanted the right to worship idols; the consequence was that later generations went to the logical end of idolatry, and offered their children to idols. Finally, they were carried into captivity, learning too late, that God does mean what he says.

- e. Often, the lesson is learned too late to avoid ruin. Departures from God's truth usually begins in a seemingly innocuous way, but one step in the wrong direction is easily followed by increasingly easier steps.
 - 1) A hundred and fifty years ago, a few of our brethren began to use instrumental music in worship; there was a landslide of others who followed suit. Before long, every kind of religious error was condoned and practiced by the majority.
 - 2) The beginning of this stampede into apostasy was in accepting one exception to the authority principle; if one activity or tenet is accepted that has no Biblical authority behind it, others will also be accepted. Christianity is an absolute Monarchy, with Christ having all authority. Before we can make a move, we must have authorization from the King.
 - 3) The departure then (and the one underway now) began by ignoring the authority principle, that is, by accepting a practice without having Bible authority for the practice. Every belief and every practice must have Christ's authorization before it can be accepted. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

D. Ezekiel 20:27-44: Chastisement Must Precede Restoration.

1. Verses 27-29: "Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. *For* when I had brought them into the land, *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings. Then I said unto them, What *is* the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day."
 - a. Ezekiel is to tell the people that their fathers had blasphemed God. To blaspheme is to speak evil of another; blasphemy includes speech that is railing, reviling, and contemptuous of the person against whom the speech is directed. One can blaspheme God by doing such things that heap ridicule upon him and demonstrate rebellion against his will.
 - b. When God, in his goodness, brought them into the promised land, they began to look around to the hills and dense woods as ideally suited for idolatry. In such places, they offered their sacrifices to their dead gods. They used the bounties of the land and other material blessings from God to honor idols.
 - c. The name *Bamah* "ought to have been long since laid aside, along with the custom of sacrificing on *high places*, which it represents, being borrowed from the heathen, who so called their places of sacrifice... The very name implies the place is not that sanctioned by me, and therefore your sacrifices even to me there (much more those you offer to idols) are only a 'provocation' to me (v.28; Deut. 12:1-5)" (JFB, p.275).
 2. Verses 30-32: "Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone."
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- a. Israel had polluted themselves by their idolatry and other sins. They had become hardened in their sin.
 - 1) Jeremiah 17:1: "The sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron, *and* with the point of a diamond: *it is* graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars."
 - 2) An even stronger statement depicting their hard hearts is given in Jeremiah 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."
 - b. With the truth God had given concerning the apostate condition of Israel, can it be any wonder that God refused to be inquired of by them? He started the chapter by utterly refusing to accept any inquiries they wanted to make. He declares here that he will not listen to them.
 - c. They had shown their sinful attitude, which was a desire to become like the heathen people around them, to give themselves over to worshiping and serving gods of wood and stone. Their demand for a king was based on the desire to be more like their pagan neighbors.
 - d. The same fault is presently being seen among certain members of the Lord's church. Every Christian ought to know better! We gain nothing for our souls by becoming like the sects; we stand to lose all that matters. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:14-18).
3. Verses 33-35: "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face."
 - a. The captivity that some of the Israelites were now experiencing, and which others would soon enter, was the means God chose to punish them so that they would give up idolatry altogether. It would be a period of purification.
 - b. Following this appropriate chastisement, God would bring them out of captivity again. He had sent them into Babylonian exile by his mighty arm; he would bring about their release by this same mighty arm.
 - c. "According to the context, this leading out is an act of divine anger, which Israel is to feel in connection therewith....According to ver. 35, God will conduct those who are brought out from the nations and gathered together out of the lands into the desert of the nations, and contend with them there.... The expression is doubtless a typical one, the future guidance of Israel being depicted as a repetition of the earlier guidance of the people from Egypt to Canaan; as it also is in Hos. 2:16" (Keil, Vol. I, p.280). "And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali" (Hos. 2:16). *Ishi* means "my husband," and *Baali* means "my lord."
 4. Verses 36-39: "Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter *also*, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols."
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- a. God guided Israel through the wilderness when he led them out of Egypt; he chided them and punished them when necessary. In the forthcoming journey through the typical wilderness, he would deal with them again. "...The leading of Israel out of the nations (ver. 34) is not a local and corporeal deliverance out of heathen lands, but a spiritual severance from the heathen world, in order that they might not be absorbed into it or become inseparably blended with the heathen. God will accomplish this by means of severe chastisements, by contending with them as he formerly contended with their fathers in the Arabian desert. God contends with his people when he charges them with their sin and guilt, not merely in words, but also with deeds, *i.e.* through chastening and punishments. The words 'face to face' point back to Deut. 5:4: 'Jehovah talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire'" (Keil, Vol. I, p.281).
 - b. They passed under the rod in the wilderness. This is a "metaphor from a shepherd who makes his sheep *pass under his rod* in counting them (Lev. 27:32; Jer. 33:13). Whether you will or not, ye shall be counted as mine, and so shall be subjected to my chastening discipline..." (JFB, p.276).
 - 1) Leviticus 27:32: "And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, *even* of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD."
 - 2) Jeremiah 33:13: "In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth *them*, saith the LORD."
 - c. Those who trespass while he leads them through this new wilderness, he will not permit to enter the land. Those who are minded to serve idols will be allowed to do so, but they will not be considered the Lord's people. He will cut them off so that they will be unable to pollute his holy name by the gifts they offer to their idols. If they want to serve idols, they may do so, but to their painful sorrow.
5. Verses 40-44: "For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. "God's people would serve him in his holy mountain. There their offerings and firstfruits and all their holy things would be accepted. 'Mountain' suggests law or government. In this case it means God's people would be subject to his law (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6). The rescue of Israel would (1) sanctify God in the eyes of the heathen nations, and (2) further prove to his own people that he was Jehovah. The recovery of the Israelites from captivity (cf. Ezek. 37) would be bittersweet, sweet from the standpoint of being returned to the land of Israel but bitter in the sense that they would remember and hate themselves for all the evil they had committed" (Hackworth, MSOP, p.212).
 - b. The gathering of Israel of the passage is their conversion from idolatry. God would not allow them to be absorbed by the captor nations. When they were brought back to their own land, that in itself would be a marvel unknown in ancient times. What other defeated, enslaved, and exiled nation ever regained their national identity? Was there ever such a nation that returned to their homeland? The usual event was that such a nation was absorbed by the captors, and lost their identity entirely. Where are the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and the Hittites?

E. Ezekiel 20:45-49: Fire is to be Kindled in the South.

1. Verses 45-47: “Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop *thy word* toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein.”
 - a. The subject changes. Ezekiel is ordered to prophesy against the forest of the south, “an allusion to the Kingdom of Judah, known as the southern kingdom or lower kingdom, and located in the southern part of Palestine, telling it (the Kingdom of Judah) that a fire would be kindled in its midst which would not, could not, be quenched, referring to the demise of Judah” (Hackworth, MSOP, p.213).
 - b. As noted earlier, many of the people of Judah had been slain or captivated by the Babylonians, but many of them remained in the land. Feeling secure behind the massive walls of Jerusalem, they seemed fairly safe from the enemy. But they could not trust in ordinary means for their safety. In fact, they had gone so far from Jehovah that there was no hope of their preservation. Their destruction is depicted as a great conflagration in a forest of trees.
 2. Verses 48-49: “And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched. Then said I, A Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?”
 - a. God stated that when these things came to pass, men would acknowledge that the Lord had kindled this great fire and that no earthly force could quench it.
 - b. Ezekiel’s response was one of concern. “The prophet’s concern as to how the people would respond to his words, whether they would consider them parabolic in nature, was not a matter that presently solicited God’s attention” (Hackworth, MSOP, p.213).
 - c. “Ezekiel complains that by this parabolic form of prophecy he only makes himself and it a jest to his countrymen. God therefore in ch. 21 permits him to express the same prophecy more plainly” (JFB, p.278).
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EZEKIEL 21

A. Ezekiel 21:1-7: The Sword of the Lord.

1. Verses 1-3: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop *thy word* toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel, And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I *am* against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked."
 - a. There may be a close connection between this passage and last four verses of the previous chapter. In the former, the prophet is to set his face against the south, and show that God would kindle a fire in the forest; the forest is the land of Judah; the trees of the forest are the people. The fire was to consume the nation and destroy many people. In the present passage, Ezekiel is told to speak against Jerusalem, using the figure of a sword to depict the destruction to be brought to bear. What is said in a dark statement (in Ezek. 20:45-49), is stated plainly here.
 - b. The sword of the Lord would be drawn against Jerusalem, to cut off from her the righteous and the wicked. In the first two incursions of the Babylonians into Judah, many were slain and others were taken into captivity; the captives included righteous and wicked people. Ezekiel and Daniel were among the righteous. The righteous were marked (9:4), "not for outward exemption from the common calamity, but as marked for the secret interpositions of Providence overruling even evil to their good. The godly were by comparison so few that their salvation is not brought into view here, but the universality of the judgment" (JFB, pp. 279f).
 - c. It may seem that God is punishing the righteous for the sins of the wicked, but it was necessary that the righteous be among the number in order that the unrighteous be warned and instructed. If God was utterly through with Israel, he would not have gone to the trouble of trying to teach them any more, while they were in exile. But he had further plans for them; his greatest purpose they were to fulfill was yet to come.
 - 1) Isaiah 9:6-7: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."
 - 2) Matthew 1:18-25: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."
 - 3) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - d. The sword would be directed against the holy places (those special parts of the temple). The temple

had been profaned by the idolatry that was practiced there; it was of no further use for Jehovah, since he cannot fellowship that which is unholy. In an earlier chapter (10), Ezekiel saw a vision which pictured the departure of God's glory from the temple. The first century Jews had made the temple into a den of thieves (Matt. 21:13), so Christ spoke of it being left desolate: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:37-38).

2. Verses 4-7: "Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: That all flesh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more. Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of *thy* loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak *as* water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. The sword is used figuratively of war. Accompanying war are many kinds of pain, devastation, and tragedy, shared by both the righteous and the wicked. The destruction to be brought to bear upon the land would come upon it from south to north, affecting every part. God's sword would not be returned to its sheath; the whole work would be done; he would not halt the punishment once it had begun.
 - b. The sword represents Babylon (21:19) and the devastation that ungodly nation would bring upon Judah. Nebuchadnezzar did not realize that he was being used as a tool to punish Judah; he did what he thought was best for his nation and his own ambitions. The Assyrians were not aware that God used them as a similar tool against the Northern Kingdom. Assyria was destroyed by Babylon; Babylon would be overcome by the Medes and Persians; the Medes and Persians would be defeated by the Greeks; the Greeks would be overwhelmed by the Romans; and the Roman Empire would fall when the principles of Christianity spread throughout it. Daniel 2.
 - c. "In order to depict the terrors of this judgment before the eyes of the people, the prophet is commanded to groan before their eyes in the most painful way..." (Keil, Vol. I, p.290). He was to mourn so that the people would perceive the awfulness of the coming tragedies. He was to groan as though his heart was breaking (NKJ). His groaning would be sincere, not a mere act.
 - d. When he was asked why he sighed, he was to tell them that it was on account of the disastrous information he had received from the Lord regarding Jerusalem. One of the meanings of "sigh" is "to lament." The coming punishment would cause every heart to melt, all hands to become feeble, every spirit to faint, and every knee to be as weak as water.

B. Ezekiel 21:8-17: The Sword of the Lord's is Sharpened.

1. Verses 8-11: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, *as* every tree. And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer."
 - a. Ezekiel is directed to speak about the sword of the Lord being sharpened and polished; it is prepared for the coming slaughter. "The polishing gives to the sword a flashing brilliancy, which renders the sharpness of its edge still more terrible" (Keil, Vol. I, p.292).
 - b. In the face of such an impending disaster, it is incongruous that any should make merry. The scepter of the king would be despised (held in contempt). The heart of every patriot is incensed when an enemy defies the head of state; the people of Judah should be filled with horror at the prospect of their king and his kingdom being "set at nought." Ezekiel's mourning was observable to all; they should go into mourning because of the imminent catastrophe affecting their nation. The sword had been

readied for its destruction, and had now been placed into the hand of the one to wield it.

- c. What is the “sceptre of my son?” In Genesis 49:10, a promise was given to Judah and his descendants [Judah was the regal tribe in Israel], that the scepter would remain theirs until the coming of *Shiloh*. The people of Judah might think that this promise would keep any hostile nation from conquering and deporting them. “The train of thought is the following: Do not think we have no reason to fear the sharply-ground sword of Jehovah, because Judah has received the promise that the sceptre shall not depart from it; and this promise will certainly be fulfilled, and Judah be victorious over every hostile power. The promise will not help you in this instance. The sword is given to be ground, not that it may be put into the scabbard, but that it may be taken in the hand by a slayer, and smite all the people and all its princes....It is not until ver. 19 that it is stated who the slayer is; but the hearers of the prophecy could be in no doubt. Consequently—this is the connection with ver. 12—there is no ground for rejoicing from a feeling of security and pride, but rather an occasion for painful lamentation. This is the meaning contained in the command to the prophet to cry and howl. For the sword will come upon the nation and its princes” (Keil, Vol. I, p.293).
2. Verses 12-13: “Cry and howl, son of man: for it shall be upon my people, it *shall be* upon all the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon *thy* thigh. Because *it is* a trial, and what if *the sword* contemn even the rod? it shall be no *more*, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. The prophet is told to cry and howl because of the terrible ordeal awaiting the people of Judah. They had been taught the right ways of the Lord, had been warned against departing therefore, in the past there were many instances of punishment sent by Jehovah as a penalty for their rebellions, and they were to endure the harshest experiences of their national existence in the near future. Ezekiel was to smite himself upon the thigh, a sign of grief. "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth" (Jer. 31:19).
 - b. The sword of the Lord (identified in verse 19 as the king of Babylon) would fall severely upon Judah. It would be a grievous trial. This sword would prevail over the scepter of Judah; Judah would be no more a kingdom. With the captivity imposed on the ten tribes, the Northern Kingdom came to an end; when the Babylonians captivated Judah and destroyed the temple, the Southern Kingdom was no more. It is obvious, of course, that none of these great national tragedies adversely affected God’s eternal plan, which involved the Messiah coming into the world, establishing the eternal kingdom, and ruling over it until the very end of time. God’s great plan of the ages could not be destroyed.
 3. Verses 14-17: “Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite *thine* hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it *is* the sword of the great *men that are* slain, which entereth into their privy chambers. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that *their* heart may faint, and *their* ruins be multiplied: ah! *it is* made bright, *it is* wrapped up for the slaughter. Go thee one way or other, *either* on the right hand, *or* on the left, whithersoever thy face *is* set. I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said *it*.”
 - a. The sword was to fall upon Jerusalem three times. To this point in time, the Babylonians had already come against Judah twice; one more assault was in the offing. The first occasion was in 606 B.C., when Jehoiakim was on Judah’s throne; the second occasion was in 597 B.C., when Jehoiachin (Jechoniah) was king; the third occasion was in 586 B.C., when Zedekiah was king. The present time was just a few years before this final attack.
 - b. Smiting the hands together was “a gesture expressive of violent emotion (cf. ch. 6:11; Num. 24:10). The sword is to double, *i.e.* to multiply itself, into threefold...” (Keil, Vol. I, p.294). Some think that the reference to “the third time” was not alluding to three separate attacks against Judah, but to the great intensity or strength of the Babylonian assault.
 - c. The sword will slay the common people as well as the princes; it will be used indiscriminately against
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all the people, even entering into the private chambers of the great men of the city.

- d. The sword will come against the gates of the city; the hearts of the citizens will melt away; there will be many to fall victim to it. It is *wrapped up* “in the hand of him who holds the hilt, or in its scabbard, that the edge may not be blunt when it is presently drawn forth to strike” (JFB, p.280). The sword would be flashed to the right and left, wherever the one who wields it shall face.
- e. “The command to the sword is strengthened by the explanation given by Jehovah in ver. 17, that he also (like the prophet, ver. 14) will smite his hands together and cool his wrath upon them (cf. ch. 5:13)” (Keil, Vol. I, p.295). “Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it* in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them” (Ezek. 5:13).

C. Ezekiel 21:18-27: The Sword Will Smite Jerusalem and the Ammonites.

1. Verses 18-20: “The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose *it* at the head of the way to the city. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced.”
 - a. Till this passage, the identity of the one to bear the sword has not been shown; we are here told that it is to be the king of Babylon, whose name was Nebuchadnezzar. He ruled the world of his time.
 - b. “The king coming from Babylon is represented, in the graphic style of Ezekiel, as reaching the point where the road branched off in two ways—one leading by the south, by Tadmor or Palmyra, to Rabbath of Ammon, east of Jordan; the other, by the north, by Riblah in Syria, to Jerusalem—and hesitating which way to take” (JFB, p.281).
 - c. The prophet is given the power to decide which way the Babylonians will take. “Set off from Babylon, and lay down two ways, either of which thou mayest take; that to the right; which leads to Jerusalem; or that to the left, which leads to Rabbath of the Ammonites, ver. 20. But why against the Ammonites? Because both they and the Moabites were united with Zedekiah against the Chaldeans. (See Jer. 27:3) though they afterwards fought against Judea, chap. 12:6” (Clarke, p.481).
 - d. “It is here noted that access into the midst of Israel was determined by God, not the Babylonians. It is important for all men, saint and sinner, to know that God is in charge of the administration of the affairs of the universe. It is he who ‘changeth the times and the seasons, he removeth kings, and setteth up kings...’ (Dan. 2:21), and ‘...the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men’ (4:17). To Christ Pilate confidently said, ‘I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?’ But Jesus said, ‘Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above...’ (John 19:10-11). Jehovah makes it unmistakably clear in the case at hand that he is in charge, that Babylon is an instrument in his hands. Babylon, as powerful as it was, was the clay, not the potter (cf. Rom. 9:20-21)” (Hackworth, MSOP, pp.215f).
2. Verses 21-22: “For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made *his* arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint *battering* rams against the gates, to cast a mount, *and* to build a fort.”
 - a. When Nebuchadnezzar came to the point where he was to make a decision regarding which to strike first, Jerusalem or Rabbath, he consulted with the divinations to which his pagan culture inclined.
 - b. The divination by arrows is said to be after this fashion: “they were put into a quiver, marked with the names of particular places to be attacked, and then shaken together; whichever came forth first intimated this one selected as the first to be attacked (Jerome). The same usage existed among the Arabs, and is mentioned in the Koran. In the Nineveh sculptures the king is represented with the cup

in his right hand, his left resting on a bow; also, with two arrows in the right and the bow in the left, probably practising divination” (JFB, p.282).

- c. Nebuchadnezzar also consulted the images (teraphim) and the liver to find guidance. Ignorance has led many in the past to suppose that intelligent decisions may be reached by examining the entrails of animals, or some other equally foolish means. In modern day America, people who have open access to the word of God are turning to the *new age* philosophies. In cartoon movies for children, characters are to be seen following similar pagan practices in order to perceive the future or to make decisions.
 - d. God was able to influence the decision Nebuchadnezzar made. God used the casting of lots on certain occasions in which to reveal his will in some particular case. Matthias was chosen to become an apostle by this means (Acts 1:23-26). "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD" (Prov. 16:33). It would be great folly today for us to make our decisions by such means; we have no way of knowing that God would guide the outcome! More important, we have the word of God by which we may be guided.
3. Verses 23-27: “And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, *I say*, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity *shall have* an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this *shall not be* the same: exalt *him that is* low, and abase *him that is* high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no *more*, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it *him*.”
- a. Nebuchadnezzar would come against Jerusalem, despite the oaths of allegiance which Zedekiah and his servants had taken to be subject to Babylon. These men would think that the decision made by the king of Babylon to attack Jerusalem, after consulting with the arrows, the images, and the liver, was a false divination. However, God was behind the decision. Nebuchadnezzar came against them because they had been false to their oath of loyalty; he was coming to punish them for their infidelity. But it was the Lord who set him up for this military venture.
 - b. The people of Judah had been disloyal to their Babylonian overlords; it is more significant that they had rebelled against God. Their transgressions would be brought to their attention when the invading army of Nebuchadnezzar appeared.
 - c. The Lord warns Zedekiah that, because of his profane and wicked ways, his day of punishment was on the way. He might as well remove the symbols of his kingship. “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Remove the turban, and take off the crown; Nothing *shall remain* the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no *longer*, Until He comes whose right it is, And I will give it *to Him*” (Ezek. 21:26-27, NKJ).
 - d. God, using the might of the Babylonian army, would utterly overthrow the kingdom of Judah. It would remain in that condition until the coming of the one whose right it was to take the throne. Here is a direct reference to the Messiah, who would reign over spiritual Israel.
 - 1) Zechariah 6:12-13: "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name *is* The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."
 - 2) Jeremiah 22:30: "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man *that* shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."
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- 3) Luke 1:32: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David."

D. Ezekiel 21:28-32: Overthrow of the Ammonites.

1. Verses 28-29: "And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword *is* drawn: for the slaughter *it is* furbished, to consume because of the glittering: Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of *them that are* slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity *shall have* an end."
 - a. The people of Judah will fall victim to the sword of the Babylonians; the Ammonites would likewise become victims to these foreign invaders. "As Judah in Jerusalem will fall by the sword of the king of Babylon, contrary to all expectation; so will the Ammonites be punished for their scorn with utter extermination" (Keil, Vol. I, p.305).
 - b. They gloated over Jerusalem's demise, and must pay for this disposition. "I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified *themselves* against their border. Therefore *as* I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, *even* the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified *themselves* against the people of the LORD of hosts. The LORD *will be* terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and *men* shall worship him, every one from his place, *even* all the isles of the heathen" (Zeph. 2:8-11).
2. Verses 30-32: "Shall I cause *it* to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, *and* skilful to destroy. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no *more* remembered: for I the LORD have spoken *it*."
 - a. The figures of speech God used in depicting the punishment of the Ammonites are powerful:
 - 1) He will pour out his indignation upon them.
 - 2) He will blow against them by the fire of his wrath.
 - 3) He will give them into the hand of brutal men who are adept at the art of killing.
 - 4) They would be fuel for the fire.
 - 5) Their blood would be shed in the midst of their land.
 - 6) They would be forgotten.
 - b. The reality of these warnings is assured by virtue of the fact that "I the Lord have spoken it."
 - c. "Thus will Ammon perish through fire and sword, and even the memory of it be obliterated.... Ammon as the enemy of the kingdom of God will utterly perish, leaving no trace behind, and without any such hope of restoration as that held out in ver. 27 to the kingdom of Judah or the people of Israel" (Keil, Vol. I, p.309).

EZEKIEL 22

A. Ezekiel 22:1-16: The Guilt of Jerusalem.

1. Verses 1-5: "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come *even* unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. *Those that be near*, and *those that be far* from thee, shall mock thee, *which art infamous and much vexed.*"
 - a. The prophet is called on in this revelation to condemn Jerusalem on account of their many abominations, especially those of idolatry and murder. The murder was done in the idolatrous practice of sacrificing their children. There could hardly be a more heinous crime! And it was practiced in the name of religion! The importance of truth in religion cannot be over-emphasized. Once a step is taken away from truth, the road is open to complete apostasy.
 - 1) Isaiah 1:15,21: "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood....How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers."
 - 2) Nahum 3:1: "Woe to the bloody city! it *is* all full of lies *and* robbery; the prey departeth not;"
 - b. When God's standard of religion is renounced, his moral code will not long be respected. In the case of Judah, they turned to sacrificing their children and murder in the usual sense of the word. In America, the sectarians of the past perverted the plan of salvation and worship as set forth in the Bible, but they held on to the standard of morality of the Bible; but in modern times, many of them have compromised moral truth, to the point that even homosexuality and abortion are accepted. If a man rejects what the Bible says about the plan of salvation, we should not be shocked when he rejects what the Bible says about a moral issue.
2. Verses 6-12: "Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. In this passage, the Lord lists some of the prominent sins found in Jerusalem. "By the repetition of the refrain, to shed blood (vers. 6,9, and 12), the enumeration is divided into three groups of sins, which are placed in the category of blood-guiltiness by the fact that they are preceded by this sentence and the repetition of it after the form of a refrain" (Keil, Vol. I, p.311).
 - b. They did not reverence parents; they did not respect holy things. The rulers had caused innocent people to be put to death, and mistreated others.
 - 1) 2 Kings 24:4: "And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon."

- 2) 2 Kings 21:16: "Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing *that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.*"
- c. "In the second group, vers. 9-11, in addition to slander and idolatry, the crimes of lewdness and incest are the principal sins for which the people are reproved; and here the allusion to Lev. 18 and 19 is very obvious. The reproof of slander also pointed back to the prohibition in Lev. 19:16. Slander to shed blood, refers to malicious charges and false testimony in a court of justice..." (Keil, Vol. I, p.312). 1 Kings 21:10-11: "And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And *then* carry him out, and stone him, that he may die. And the men of his city, *even* the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, *and* as it *was* written in the letters which she had sent unto them."
- d. The third group consisted of those whose prime motivation was covetousness. They would extort money from their neighbors; no particular scheme is identified, but many could be invented by sinful minds. Some even shed blood for profit.
- 1) Luke 12:15: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The parable of the rich farmer which immediately follows this verse illustrates the folly of covetousness.
- 2) The presence of this sin indicates that the guilty parties have forgotten God. Covetousness is one of modern man's "nice" transgressions, but God views it in its true light: an exaltation of material concerns above the spiritual; the worship of possessions and wealth, instead of God. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).
- 3) John 6:27: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."
3. Verses 13-16: "Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken *it*, and will do *it*. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD."
- a. Ezekiel 22:13-16: Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst. "Can your heart endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken, and will do *it*. I will scatter you among the nations, disperse you throughout the countries, and remove your filthiness completely from you. You shall defile yourself in the sight of the nations; then you shall know that I *am* the LORD" (NKJ).
- b. Ezekiel 22:13-16: "Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I, Jehovah, have spoken it, and will do it. And I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries; and I will consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shalt be profaned in thyself, in the sight of the nations; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah" (ASV).
- c. The two items which incited God's wrath in the context were covetousness and blood-guiltiness. These were not the only sins of Judah, but these are emphasized here. The result of their transgressions in these matters was judgment from God.
- d. Their covetousness led them to use violent means to acquire what they coveted; for this they would incur the punishment of God. Smiting the hands together was an idiom indicating anger that is to be
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expressed. They would not be able to fend off God's wrath; they were not strong enough, and their heart could not endure it.

- e. They would be scattered among the pagan nations, being dispersed through the various countries; that which they had acquired through bloodshed and covetousness would be consumed in the process.
- f. Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself: "Formerly thou wast *mine* inheritance, and I was thine inheritance (Jer. 10:16; Exod. 19:5); but now, full of guilt, thou are no longer mine, but *thine own inheritance to thyself*: I am no longer thine inheritance 'in the sight of the heathen'—*i.e.*, even they shall see that, now that thou hast become a captive, thou are no longer owned as mine....the heathen shall regard thee as a polluted thing, who hast bought thine own reproach on thyself" (JFB, p.286).

B. Ezekiel 22:17-22: Israel's is to be Refined in the Furnace of Babylon's Siege.

- 1. Verses 17-18: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they *are* brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are *even* the dross of silver."
 - a. In this revelation, God described Israel as the dross (the impurities) intermingled in the ore of precious metal. To separate the pure metal from the dross, a refining furnace was used to burn off the impurities, leaving behind only the pure metal. The ore would not be usable in its original state. This illustration is found in many places in the Bible:
 - 1) Psalms 12:6: "The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."
 - 2) Psalms 119:119: "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross: therefore I love thy testimonies."
 - 3) Proverbs 17:3: "The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts."
 - 4) Proverbs 25:4: "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer."
 - 5) Jeremiah 6:27-30: "I have set thee *for* a tower *and* a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way. They *are* all grievous revolvers, walking with slanders: *they are* brass and iron; they *are* all corrupters. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall *men* call them, because the LORD hath rejected them."
 - 6) Jeremiah 9:7: "Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?"
 - 7) Zechariah 13:9: "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It *is* my people: and they shall say, The LORD *is* my God."
 - 8) Malachi 3:2-4: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years."
 - 9) Job 23:10: "But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."
 - b. Israel had so many impurities within her that a furnace was necessary to burn them away, leaving behind a pure nation. The impending assault by the Babylonians was likened to that furnace. When they exited from the furnace (the Babylonian experiences), they would be cleansed from their idolatry

and the many associated sinful activities.

2. Verses 19-22: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. *As* they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt *it*; so will I gather *you* in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave *you there*, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you."
 - a. Jerusalem would be the refining pot and the Babylonians would be the fire in God's upcoming smelting operation. "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10).
 - b. Isaiah 1:22-25: "Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin."

C. Ezekiel 22:23-31: The Corruption of the Nation.

1. Verses 23-25: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou *art* the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. *There is* a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof."
 - a. Other translations:
 - 1) Ezekiel 22:23-25: And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, say to her: 'You *are* a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.' The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst (NKJ).
 - 2) Ezekiel 22:23-25: "And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art a land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they take treasure and precious things; they have made her widows many in the midst thereof" (ASV).
 - b. The picture presented here to the prophet is that of a land without the cleansing and nurturing of rain. Rain flushes the filth of the earth away; it dilutes much of it and causes other items to be soaked into the ground. There was no cleansing rain, in the figure being used. The problem is that Israel was spiritually filthy and without the blessings of God.
 - c. The false prophets, instead of teaching and admonishing the people to be righteous, were united in conspiracy to the hurt of the nation. They were like a roaring lion tearing at its prey. This is very much akin to the destruction preachers are bringing upon many congregations; instead of building them up in the most holy faith, they are depriving the people of the soul-saving and edifying gospel, and substituting in its place, the foolish philosophies and false doctrine of men.
 - d. These prophets had stolen the treasures and precious things. They had taken all the financial gain they could obtain, and had given the people nothing in return, except the filth of false doctrine. They did their work by violence, resulting in the making of many widows.
 - 1) Hosea 6:9: "And as troops of robbers wait for a man, *so* the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness."

- 2) Zephaniah 3:3-4: "Her princes within her *are* roaring lions; her judges *are* evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets *are* light *and* treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law."
 - 3) Matthew 23:14: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."
2. Verse 26: "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them."
- a. The sins of the priests now are exposed. They had violated God's law; several specifications are given. They had not only transgressed it, but had done violence to it. As with all false teachers, they twisted the truth to make it suit their evil designs.
 - b. They had profaned God's holy things. The temple, the items involved in temple worship, and their very office—the priests had perverted all of these from their holy usage. They did not maintain the distinction between that which is holy and that which is profane (common); they did not differentiate between that which was clean and that which was unclean. Their modern counterparts do the same kind of thing when they corrupt the worship, making it a period of fun and frolic, putting on a disorderly and irreverent show to entertain the audience.
 - c. The priests had ignored the sabbath. Instead of remembering it and keeping it holy, they had misused it to their own purposes. The Lord's day in the gospel age is not intended to be like the sabbath, but was ordained as a time for worship and Christian service; many have perverted it to their own selfish ends.
 - d. By profaning the holy things of God, in violating his law, they were profaning the Almighty. To reject God's law is to reject him who gave the law; to despise his law is to despise him; to bring God's law down and twist it to worldly purposes, is to profane God himself.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 12:9-10: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."
 - 2) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
3. Verse 27: "Her princes in the midst thereof *are* like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, *and* to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain."
- a. The rulers were like wolves, tearing at the prey. They did not have the best interests of the nation at heart, but were more interested in "filling their own sack." Politicians have the reputation of selfishness, more than for the public good. It appears that the longer time continues, the more people stay the same.
 - b. The rulers were not above violence and murder in order to get their dishonest gain.
4. Verse 28: "And her prophets have daubed them with untempered *mortar*, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken."
- a. Other translations:
 - 1) "Her prophets plastered them with untempered *mortar*, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD had not spoken (NKJ).
 - 2) "And her prophets have daubed for them with untempered *mortar*, seeing false visions, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, when Jehovah hath not spoken"
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(ASV).

- b. The prophets are brought up again, and once more given a scathing denunciation. They had put forth a semblance of teaching, but they had used empty words and told lies.
 - c. Their work is depicted as building a masonry edifice, but they used untempered (rotten) mortar; what they built would not stand, but crumble. Their messages were of their own invention; God had nothing to do with their words.
5. Verse 29: "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully."
- a. The general population is next described and their sins exposed. They were guilty of oppressing those who were at their mercy; they had robbed; they had vexed the poor and the stranger.
 - b. A certain percentage of the population of any society would be willing to act with violence on others if they could get by with it. We may be sure, with the venom that is apparent in the demeanor and words of some of our enemies today, if they could avoid justice, we would be sorely persecuted! The only restraining force keeping them in check is the law of an orderly society.
 - c. Jeremiah 5:30-31: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it so*: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"
6. Verses 30-31: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. God looked for some righteous person to give him reason to avoid sending the punishment, but there was none to be found. He looked for someone to stand in the gap, to warn Israel of their impending doom, but those whose job it was to perform this function, had all polluted themselves; they were part of the problem, and could not be depended on to help solve the problem.
 - b. Other translations:
 - 1) Ezekiel 22:30-31: So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. "Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD (NKJ).
 - 2) Ezekiel 22:30-31: "And I sought for a man among them, that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I brought upon their heads, saith the Lord Jehovah" (ASV).
 - c. There was no one who would or could stand in the gap to halt the apostasy, therefore, punishment was necessary.
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EZEKIEL 23

A. Ezekiel 23:1-21: Aholah and Aholibah.

1. Verses 1-4: "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. And the names of them *were* Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus *were* their names; Samaria *is* Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah."
 - a. The two women discussed in this context were sisters, the daughters of the same mother. Both of these sisters learned harlotry in Egypt; it was there that they lost their virginity.
 - b. The mother of these two sisters is identified when the sisters are named. The elder sister is identified as Samaria (the capital of the Northern Kingdom); the younger sister is Jerusalem (the capital of Judah, the Southern Kingdom). The mother, therefore, is the united nation of Israel, comprised of the twelve tribes (plus Levi).
 - c. The names of the two sisters are given. Samaria is Aholah ("her tent") and Aholibah is Jerusalem ("my tent is in her"). The name given Samaria is that she trusted in herself; she developed and maintained her own system of religion. The name given Jerusalem shows that God's tent was there; the people of Judah maintained the true religion of Jehovah for a time. The Northern Kingdom lived in rebellion against God throughout their history; the Southern Kingdom maintained loyalty to God at the first, but fell into sin and idolatry just as its northern neighbor had done.
2. Verses 5-10: "And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians *her* neighbours, *Which were* clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them *that were* the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself. Neither left she her whoredoms *brought* from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword: and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her."
 - a. The Northern Kingdom began when Jeroboam and ten of the tribes split apart from the two southern tribes; the occasion was the harshness of Rehoboam's rule following the death of Solomon. Realizing that he could not maintain his throne if his people continued to go to Jerusalem to worship at the temple, Jeroboam established a man-made religious system of his own (1 Kings 12). The practice of following religious error is depicted in the Bible as spiritual adultery (cf. Hosea and Gomer):
 - 1) Hosea 1:2: "The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the LORD."
 - 2) Hosea 2:5: "For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink."
 - 3) Hosea 4:10-15: "For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart. My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good: therefore your daughters

shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall. Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth."

- 4) Hosea 5:3: "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, *and* Israel is defiled."
 - 5) Hosea 6:10: "I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there *is* the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled."
- b. "Coquetting and whoring with Assyria and Egypt denote religious and political leaning towards and connection with these nations and kingdoms, including idolatry and the formation of alliances with them, as in chap. 16....The description given of the Assyrians in ver. 6 contains the thought that Israel, dazzled by Assyria's splendour, and overpowered by the might of that kingdom, had been drawn into intercourse with the Assyrians, which led her astray into idolatry. The predicate, clothed in purple, points to the splendour and glory of this imperial power; the other predicates, to the magnitude of its military force" (Keil, Vol. I, p.323).
 - c. The Northern Kingdom became "famous" (notorious) for her spiritual adultery. When she courted the favors of Assyria, she was contaminated by the association; she adopted his idolatry. Instead of being protected by her political bedfellow, she was overcome and destroyed by him. The punishment that she incurred made them a hiss and a byword among the neighbors.
3. Verses 11-16: "And when her sister Aholibah saw *this*, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in *her* whoredoms. She doted upon the Assyrians *her* neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. Then I saw that she was defiled, *that* they *took* both one way, And *that* she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea."
 - a. Jerusalem (Aholibah) saw what her sister was doing, and knowing the consequences of such practices, also entered into an entangling association with the Assyrians. Her evil was greater than her sister's. She had the advantage of having the temple, the truth, and the help of Jehovah; she should have profited better from the bitter experiences of her northern sister.
 - b. 2 Kings 16:7-9: "So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, *I am* thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent *it for* a present to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people of* it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin." Ahaz also adopted some of the religious practices of the Assyrians (2 Kings 16:10ff).
 - c. "Judah went much further than Samaria. It not only indulged in sinful intercourse with Assyria, which led on to idolatry as the latter had done, but it also allowed itself to be led astray by power, and to defile itself with her idolatry. And when it became tired of the Chaldeans, it formed impure connections with the Egyptians, as it had done once before during its sojourn in Egypt. The description of the Assyrians in ver. 12 coincides with that in vers. 5 and 6, except that some of the predicates are placed in a different order..." (Keil, Vol. I, p.325).
4. Verses 17-21: "And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their
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whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them. So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister. Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh *is as* the flesh of asses, and whose issue *is like* the issue of horses. Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.”

- a. Later, the Babylonians came to Judah, entered into a relationship with God’s people which is described as harlotry. Israel was not permitted to be allies with pagan nations, and were also forbidden to worship idols. In this spiritual adultery, they did both. *Paramours* are illicit lovers.
- b. The result of this connection was that God was alienated from them, and they soon lost the support of the Babylonians. What happened to the elder sister (Samaria) was destined to befall the younger sister (Jerusalem). Their “nakedness” being “discovered” is a reference to the destruction, shame, and despair to which they were subjected.

B. Ezekiel 23:22-35: Aholibah’s Lovers Will Execute Judgment.

1. Verses 22-24: “Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, *and* all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, *which* shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments.”
 - a. In practical terms, Israel was subjugated to the Babylonians, and was forced to pay tribute to them. When Jehoiakim rebelled, the Chaldeans came against Jerusalem (606 A.D.); a similar incursion took place again in 597 B.C. Zedekiah rebelled against his overlords, which resulted in the final siege and attack, bringing about the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The tribute became too heavy for Judah to bear, but it was too late to avoid the consequences of her rejection of God.
 - b. In practical language, God here informs Judah that Babylon would come against them with all of their fighting men and machines; the judgment they would bring against Jerusalem was of God’s design. Judah would be at their mercy, and deservedly so, on account of their rebellion against Jehovah.
 2. Verses 25-29: “And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand *of them* whom thou hatest, into the hand *of them* from whom thy mind is alienated: And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.”
 - a. Verse twenty-five gives a gruesome picture of the outcome of the attack. The Babylonians would cut off their nose and ears, and finish them off with the sword. This undoubtedly happened literally in some of the cases; at any rate, wholesale slaughter and destruction would occur. Their sons and daughters, in which they would naturally glory, would be taken. In the case of Zedekiah, his sons were slain before his eyes, and then his eyes were put out.
 - b. Cutting off the nose and ears was one way of punishing an adulteress. Verse twenty-six speaks of the invaders stripping away their clothes and robbing them of their jewels. Verse twenty-nine states that they would be left naked and bare, with the objects of their labor destroyed and their lewdness fully exposed for all to see. During the time of peace and prosperity prior to their punishment, they could
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make assertions that they were loyal to the Lord, but when their sorry state during and after the assault of the Babylonians was brought to view, all pretense of faithfulness would be exploded. The liberal elements in the Lord's church today make claims to spirituality and loyalty to Christ, but when they are brought before the Judgment Seat of the Lord, their disobedience will be their shame.

- c. Using his instrument of punishment (Babylon), God would cause them to cease from their lewdness. After such an awful experience as that which the Babylonians would visit upon them, they would never again turn to wholesale idolatry again. Future generations of the Israelites would rebel against God, but they would learn well the lesson that idolatry must be forsaken altogether. They would no longer look to Egypt, where they first learned idolatry.
 - d. The only safety and hope Judah had was to be found in obedience to the law of God. If they had turned back to him in genuine penitence, no enemy would have been sufficiently strong to overcome them; God would have protected them. Today, prominent men and congregations of the Lord's people are making truce with the enemy (the sectarians); they heap ridicule upon the faithful, shaming us for being so narrow to think we are the only ones acceptable to God. At the present, they may seem to have the upper hand in many cases, but time and eternity will prove the emptiness of their assertions and ungodly actions. In the Judgment, only obedience and faithfulness will avail.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 2) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
3. Verses 30-35: "I will do these *things* unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, *and* because thou art polluted with their idols. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. Thou shalt even drink it and suck *it* out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms."
- a. The awfulness of the punishment is great, but was to be brought upon them because they had gone after the heathen and their gods. They had followed the steps of their sister, the Northern Kingdom. As that nation was destroyed, so Judah would be destroyed.
 - b. "As Jerusalem has given herself up to whoredom, like her sister Samaria, she shall also share her sister's fate. The paramours, of whom she has become tired, God will bring against her as enemies. The Chaldeans will come with all their might, and execute the judgment of destruction upon her.... Judah shall drink the cup of the wrathful judgment of God, as Samaria has done.... The cup is described in ver. 32 as deep and wide, *i.e.* very capacious, so that whoever exhausts all its contents must be thoroughly intoxicated.... The greatness or breadth of the cup will be a subject of laughter and ridicule" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.229-331). "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it" (Jer. 25:15).
 - c. In their extreme despair, they are pictured as taking the broken pieces of the cup and using them as weapons to cut and mutilate themselves. The sorrows described are those of the nation; in their great desperation and gloom, they would abhor those elements that had led them into their present dreadful condition.

C. Ezekiel 23:36-49: The Abomination of Samaria and Jerusalem.

1. Verses 36-39: "The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; That they have committed adultery, and blood *is* in their

hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through *the fire*, to devour *them*. Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.”

- a. Ezekiel is called on to pass judgment against Aholah and Aholibah on account of their abominations. The Lord gives some specifications of their sins: they committed adultery; they had shed blood; they had committed idolatry in worshiping their idols; they had offered their children unto their idols; they participated in such conduct and had gone into God’s sanctuary the same day.
 - b. They deluded themselves into thinking they could be engaged in idol worship and the other sinful acts indicated, and still thought they could also serve God at the temple. They had also profaned his sabbath days. These are only a few representative specifications given to prove their abominations.
2. Verses 40-44: “And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger *was* sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. And a voice of a multitude being at ease *was* with her: and with the men of the common sort *were* brought Sabean from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. Then said I unto *her that was* old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she *with them*? Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women.”
- a. In verse forty, they are said to have sent messengers to call men to come visit them from afar; when they came, the nation is depicted as painting itself and preparing for an illicit tryst. Compare: "And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard *of it*; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window" (2 Kings 9:30).
 - b. The picture given is that of a harlot who makes elaborate preparations for the visitor. A stately couch (bed) was prepared; a table was prepared; incense and oil were provided. Judah had done such things in enticing the pagans to court her. They were no better than the common harlot.
3. Verses 45-49: “And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they *are* adulteresses, and blood *is* in their hands. For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.”
- a. In literal cases amid an honorable society, righteous men would punish harlots and adulterers, as well as those who shed blood. The desire for an orderly, safe society demands such actions.
 - b. God would bring upon Judah an army that would spoil and remove them from the land; this army would stone them (a figure of speech); kill them with the sword; slay their children; burn their houses. This penalty was necessary if the evil noted was to be stamped out.
 - c. Other nations (*all women*) could learn a great lesson from this harsh experience of Judah.
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EZEKIEL 24

A. Ezekiel 24:1-14: The Fall of Jerusalem.

1. Verses 1-2: "Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, *even* of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day."
 - a. "The date given, namely, the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year after the carrying away of Jehoiachin [1:1,2], or what is the same thing, of the reign of Zedekiah, who was appointed king in his stead..." (Keil, Vol. I, pp.339f).
 - 1) Jeremiah 39:1-2: "In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. *And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up."
 - 2) 2 Kings 25:1-4: "And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it: and they built forts against it round about. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. And on the ninth *day* of the *fourth* month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. And the city was broken up, and all the men of war *fled* by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which *is* by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees *were* against the city round about:) and *the king* went the way toward the plain."
 - 3) Jeremiah 52:4-5: "And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah."
 - b. The siege against Jerusalem lasted for eighteen months, during which there was immense suffering and death. With the fall of the city, many were slain, including the king's sons, and many people were taken into exile in Babylonia. "And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city. So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land. This *is* the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty: In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons *were* four thousand and six hundred" (Jer. 52:24-30).
 - c. The very day that Nebuchadnezzar began his 18-month siege of Jerusalem, God informed that fact to Ezekiel, and instructed him to record it; in the following verses, he is told to report the fact to the Jews in exile. The only way the prophet could have known of the beginning of the siege was by revelation from God. Later, when the official report of the siege reached their ears, they could know beyond any doubt that Ezekiel was a true prophet of God.
 - d. This chapter concludes the first division of the book; in this first half of his record, Ezekiel predicted

the downfall of Jerusalem by various pictures and parables. The beginning of the end of the city has now started; the prophet is directed to depict its overthrow in a most graphic picture.

2. Verses 3-8: “And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Set on a pot, set *it* on, and also pour water into it: Gather the pieces thereof into it, *even* every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill *it* with the choice bones. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, *and* make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein. Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum *is* therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it. For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust; That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered.”
 - a. In his prophetic picture, called a parable here, the people are told to set up an iron pot and fill it with water; they were to gather the various parts of an animal’s carcass and put them into the pot. The pot was to have a fire built under it so that the flesh and bones might be well-cooked.
 - b. “Alluding to the self-confident proverb used among the people (ch. 11:3...), ‘This city is the caldron, and we be the flesh;’ your proverb shall prove awfully true, but in a different sense from what you intend. So far from the city proving an iron caldron-like defence from the fire, it shall be as a caldron set on the fire, and the people as so many pieces of meat subjected to boiling heat” (JFB, p.294).
 - c. The city is represented by the pot; the choice pieces of meat are the leaders and chief people of the city; the flesh in the pot represents the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The bones under the pot depict those who have no flesh left on them (the poorest of the people, who are put out of their misery first).
 - d. The terrible affliction and destruction to be brought against Jerusalem was earned by reason of the sinful conduct of the people. They had been warned, but would not repent. The scum in the pot is the permeating wickedness that filled Jerusalem. Each piece in the caldron would be subjected to the tribulation; no lot would be cast by which any of them would be shown favor.
 - e. The bloodshed which the inhabitants of Jerusalem had shed during their rebellion against God was open to the sight of all. The blood they shed was as if it had been poured upon the top of a rock; its presence was obvious. They did not pour it upon the ground and cover it with soil. “The law ordered the blood even of a beast or fowl to be ‘covered with the dust’ (Lev. 17:13); but she was so shameless as to be at no pains to cover up the blood of innocent men slain in her, but openly in the most conspicuous place, to expose her guilt. *Blood*, as the consummation of all sin, pre-supposes every other form of guilt” (JFB, p.295).
 - f. The source of this affliction was Babylon, who would enter the land from the north. "And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof *is* toward the north" (Jer. 1:13).
3. Verses 9-14: “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and *that* the filthiness of it may be molten in it, *that* the scum of it may be consumed. She hath wearied *herself* with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum *shall be* in the fire. In thy filthiness *is* lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the LORD have spoken *it*: it shall come to pass, and I will do *it*; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. “To avenge the guilt, God will make the pile of wood large, and stir up a fierce fire. The development of this thought is given in ver. 10 in the form of a command addressed to the prophet, to put much wood underneath, and to kindle a fire, so that both flesh and bones may boil away....When the flesh and bones have thus been thoroughly boiled, the pot is to be placed upon the coals empty, that the rust

upon it may be burned away by the heat....The uncleanness of the pot is the rust upon it” (Keil, Vol. I, pp.345f).

- b. God is giving a verbal picture in parabolic form to describe to the exile Jews the destruction being then imposed on their brethren back at Jerusalem. He calls for more wood, that the fire may be intense; he directs that the contents of the pot be well-seasoned with spices, that the “taste” of the “meal” will be palatable to the Babylonians, who were “cooking” Jerusalem.
- c. The city had worn itself out in committing sin; her sins included lies and lewdness; the scum of sins was great, but God would burn it up in the conflagration of the Babylonian siege and assault. God would not rest until his wrath had been poured fully upon Jerusalem. “Even the consumption of the contents is not enough; the caldron itself, which is infected by the poisonous scum, must be destroyed—*i.e.*, the city itself must be destroyed, not merely the inhabitants, just as the very house infected with leprosy was to be destroyed (Lev. 14:34-35)” (JFB, p.295).
- d. God had determined the fate of the city; he would not go back on his word; they had reached the point of no return; it was too late for a reprieve to be offered. They had had more than sufficient time and occasion to repent, but refused to do so. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*" (Jer. 6:16).
 - 1) Our nation is fast approaching a similar disaster; it has had ample time, reason, and opportunity to come to a sort of national repentance, but is plunging further and more deeply into depravity; it has largely rejected the precepts of the gospel, which at the first formed the basis of its existence. Although our founding fathers were not Christians in the New Testament sense of the word, they were God-fearing men, who believed in the power of his word.
 - 2) The Lord’s church in this nation is also nearing a similar disaster. It has courted with sin and sectarianism for many years; many preachers and elders have corrupted themselves by sin and false doctrine; the majority of the members have likewise become tainted; those who maintain a strong stance in the truth are shunned, hated, and dismissed as anachronistic. But since only the truth can save, only those who follow the truth will be saved.
 - a) John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

B. Ezekiel 24:15-27: Death of Ezekiel’s Wife to Symbolize the Nation.

1. Verses 15-18: “Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.”
 - a. Ezekiel is required to do a most unusual thing. God reported to him that his wife was to die that day, but that the prophet was not to mourn for her. The “desire” of his heart was his wife. This was to be a sign to the captives that they were not to mourn when news came of the downfall of their beloved city.
 - b. “The energy and subordination of Ezekiel’s whole life to his prophetic office is strikingly displayed in this narrative of his wife’s death. It is the only memorable event of his personal history which he records, and this only in reference to his soul-absorbing work. His natural tenderness is shown by that graphic touch, ‘the desire of thine eyes.’ What amazing subjection, then, of his individual feeling to

- his prophetic duty is manifested in the simple statement (v.18): ‘So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded’ (JFB, p.295).
- c. Ezekiel is not to cry or mourn, according to the custom when someone near and dear had died. He was not to remove his headdress; the head covering was usually removed and dust and ashes were put on the head. Compare: "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads" (Josh. 7:6).
 - 1) The prophet was not to remove his shoes, which was another sign of mourning. "And David went up by the ascent of *mount Olivet*, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that *was* with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (2 Sam. 15:30).
 - 2) He is told not to cover his lips, another sign of grieving. "Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for *there is* no answer of God" (Micah 3:7).
 - 3) He was not to partake of the food brought in by neighbors who sought to offer comfort. In order to refrain from displaying grief over his loss, he was not to eat the food his friends would bring; apparently he was to provide his own food.
 - d. The cause of the death of his beloved wife is attributed to “a stroke” from the Lord. Her death would be sudden and unexpected. She likely did not know ahead of time about her part in the operation. It was not wicked of God to take her life; it would be merciful and painless. But in this special plan, she had an important part in God’s arrangements. There are some points of comparison between her and Isaac, when that young man was used as a test of his father’s faith (Gen. 22).
2. Verses 19-24: “And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these *things are* to us, that thou doest *so*? Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover *your* lips, nor eat the bread of men. And your *tires shall be* upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.”
- a. Ezekiel spoke to the people in the morning; in the evening his wife died; the following morning he followed the instructions God gave him, and refrained from any of the usual demonstrations of grief. He volunteered no information about his unusual conduct. They were moved to inquire.
 - b. The prophet then delivered the message God gave him. God would profane his sanctuary; this he did by allowing the Babylonians to conquer Jerusalem, after which they plundered and destroyed the temple. The Jewish captives were full of longing for the temple; it was the center of their reflections. The temple was more to the Jews of that ancient time than Washington, D.C., and its national treasures are to most Americans. But God would allow the temple to be destroyed.
 - c. Further, the young generation living in Jerusalem would fall by the sword. Some of these evidently were offspring of the captives. Think how devastating it would be to adult Americans if nearly all of the young generation was to be starved to death, die of disease, and to be slaughtered by heathen invaders. This is what happened to their people, young and old.
 - d. The prophet instructed the people that they were to follow his example; as he did not mourn for his dead wife, they were not to mourn for the tragedy that was to befall their beloved city and temple. As far as we know, Ezekiel’s wife was a godly woman; but the people of Jerusalem were not godly; they were being justly punished for their grievous transgressions; they deserved what they received. This is why the exiles are not to mourn; God was justly punishing them for their many offenses.
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3. Verses 25-27: “Also, thou son of man, *shall it not be* in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters, *That* he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause *thee* to hear *it* with *thine* ears? In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.”
 - a. Eighteen months later, news would reach them of Jerusalem’s fall; they would learn that Ezekiel had predicted the exact details of its destruction; they would then know that Ezekiel was a true prophet and that God is truly the Lord.
 - b. The prophet is not to speak until the siege was over and the report came of the tragedy. God would allow someone to escape to bring the message. Ezekiel would then cease to be mute, but to speak. “As Ezekiel up to this time was to speak to the people only when the Lord gave him a word for them, and at other times was to remain silent and dumb (ch. 3:26 and 27); from the day on which a messenger should come to bring him the tidings of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, he was to open his mouth, and not continue dumb any longer” (Keil, Vol. I, p.351).
 - c. When the report of the city’s destruction came, the exiles would be more inclined to listen to God’s word. Until then, they would live with the desire to return home, to their loved ones and to their temple; but with the temple destroyed, the city in ruins, and their loved ones either dead or in exile, they would have only one proper alternative: to turn back to God. They would now be fully convinced that God is the Lord, that Ezekiel is his true spokesman, and that God’s word is to be followed.
 - d. With the next chapter, God begins to reveal some coming judgments against the enemies of Israel.
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EZEKIEL 25

A. Ezekiel 25:1-7: The Punishment of Ammon.

1. Verses 1-4: "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk."
 - a. There were many mighty men and mighty nations in ancient times, which are unknown to the average man of today. Their history is often obscure, with only a faint image of their greatness left imprinted in the historical record. The average person in modern times knows little of Asshur, Elam, and Scythia. Those living during the heyday of ancient, powerful kingdoms would not think that there would ever be an end to these dominant powers. But one-by-one, these all were overthrown. The people of Israel had suffered at the hands of many powerful enemies, but God in his providential operations would bring them to their downfall.
 - b. AMMONITES: Semitic people living northeast of the Dead Sea in the area surrounding Rabbah who often battled with the Israelites for possession of the fertile Gilead. See Deut. 2:20; 23:3; 1 Sam. 11; 2 Sam. 23:37; 1 Ki. 11; 1 Chr. 11:39; 2 Chr. 12:13; 20:1; 24:26; 26:8; 27:5; Ezra 9:1; Neh. 2:10, 19; 4:3, 7; 13:1; Jer. 40:11, 14; 41:10, 15; 49:1-2; Ezek. 25. Ammon, the kingdom of the Ammonites, was hardly more than a city-state, consisting of the capital city itself, Rabbah or Rabbath-Ammon ("chief city," or "chief city of the Ammonites") and its immediately surrounding territory. Rabbath was located at the headwaters of the Jabbok river, where the southeastern corner of Gilead gives way to the desert. The agricultural productivity of Gilead, the waters of the Jabbok itself and of associated springs, as well as Rabbah's naturally defendable position, destined Rabbah to be a city of medium importance in ancient times. The proximity of the Ammonites to Gilead likewise destined them to be constant enemies of the Israelites, who made claims to Gilead and actually controlled it during the reigns of certain strong kings such as David, Omri, Ahab, and Jeroboam II. Most of our information about the Ammonites comes from the Old Testament, although Ammonite kings are mentioned occasionally in the Assyrian records. We know from the latter, for example, that an Ammonite king named Ba'sha, along with Ahab of Israel and other kings of the region, defended Syria-Palestine against Shalmaneser III in 853 B.C. An Ammonite inscription, the so-called Siran Bottle Inscription and several seals/seal impressions have provided additional information about the Ammonites. Archaeologists have excavated only a small portion of the site of ancient Rabbah (the so-called "Citadel" in the heart of the modern city of Amman). The surrounding area remains largely unexplored. In addition to the inscription and seals mentioned above, the bust of an Ammonite warrior (or god) and the remains of round stone towers thought to be Ammonite are significant archaeological discoveries shedding light on the Ammonites. Conflict broke out between the Ammonites and Israelites as early as the time of the Judges. The Ammonites made war on the Israelites of Gilead, leading the Israelites to appeal to Jephthah, chief of a local band of renegade raiders, to organize and lead their resistance. Jephthah accepted the challenge, but only after extracting a promise from the elders of Gilead that, if he indeed succeeded in defeating the Ammonites, they would recognize him as ruler of Gilead. At the same time he vowed to Yahweh that "If thou wilt give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the LORD's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering" (Judg. 11:30b-31). Jephthah was victorious, and the Gileadites submitted to his rule; but then his little daughter greeted him upon his return (Judg. 10:6-11:40). On another

occasion when the Ammonites were attacking the city of Jabesh in Gilead and the Jabeshites attempted to negotiate terms for surrender, the Ammonites demanded nothing less than to put out the right eye of each man in the city. In desperation, the Jabeshites sent messengers to Saul at Gibeah for help. Saul organized an army, hurried to Jabesh, and lifted the siege. Consequently, the Jabeshites were strong supporters of Saul in later years (1 Sam. 11; 31:11-13). The Ammonite king Saul defeated at Jabesh was Nahash. Presumably this was the same Nahash with whom David had good dealings but whose son, Hanun, renewed hostilities (2 Sam. 10-12). The ensuing wars between Israel and Ammon involved warfare between David's troops and those of Hadadezer of Zobah (2 Sam. 10:6-19) and provided the occasion of David's affair with Bathsheba. Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, was killed while storming the walls of Rabbah (2 Sam. 11-12). No war with the Ammonites is reported during Solomon's reign. On the contrary, Solomon took one or more Ammonite wives and allowed the worship of Milcom, the Ammonite god, in Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:1-8). Presumably the worship of Milcom continued in Jerusalem until it was stamped out by Josiah many years later (2 Kings 23:13). We know little of relations between the Ammonites and either Israel or Judah during the first half century of the separate kingdoms, probably because neither of the Hebrew kingdoms attempted to exercise influence in the Transjordan. The coalition of Syro-Palestinian kings, which included Ba'sha of Ammon and Ahab of Israel, halted the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser's march in 853 B.C. But success was only temporary. Later Shalmaneser penetrated the very heart of Syria-Palestine, exacting tribute from the Israelites and, although it is not recorded, probably also from the Ammonites. Eventually, all the petty kingdoms of the region fell to the Assyrians and either were incorporated into the Assyrian province system or controlled as satellites. Ammonite kings paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon. The Israelites recognized the Ammonites as relatives, although somewhat more distant than the Edomites. This relationship was expressed genealogically. Specifically, the Ammonites were said to have descended from an ancestor named Ben-Ammi, one of two sons which Lot bore to his two daughters. The Moabites were said to have descended from the other son (Gen. 19:30-38). The Ammonites also are mentioned from time to time in Israel's poetical literature. See for example Amos' oracle against the Ammonites in Amos 1:13-15. Rabbah apparently had dwindled to an insignificant settlement by the third century B.C. when Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246) rebuilt the city and renamed it "Philadelphia" after himself. Philadelphia came to be regarded as one of the Decapolis cities, a federation of ten Greek cities in Palestine (Matt. 4:25), and was annexed with the whole Decapolis region to the Roman empire in A.D. 90. The city reached its zenith during the second century A.D., benefiting from the active commerce which moved along the old trade route connecting Damascus and Bostra with the Gulf of Aqabah and western Arabia. The old route was refurbished at that time under the name *Via Nova Triana* ("Trajan's New Road"), and Philadelphia itself was expanded on a grand scale. Remains of this second century Roman phase of the city are still standing in the heart of the modern city of Amman including the Roman theater, the nymphaeum, and temple ruins on the citadel. Philadelphia, as all of the cities along the *Via Nova*, began to decline in the third century due to security problems along the Roman frontier and shifts in commercial patterns. Yet it continued as a relatively important city into the Byzantine period. It became the seat of a bishopric and sent representatives to the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) and the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). Decline continued during the Islamic period until eventually the site of ancient Rabbah/Philadelphia was represented only by a desolate ruin. This was the situation when the place was visited by western travelers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The history of the modern city, called now Amman, began with resettlement of the site by Circassian refugees in 1878. [Maxwell Miller, Holman PC Bible Dictionary].

- c. "The sin of Ammon was haughty contempt and delight in the misfortunes of others. The people of Ammon saw the misery of the Jews and were glad....Malice, envy, and jealousy are always wrong. If our most sincere and dedicated enemy is overtaken and overwhelmed by catastrophe, we should not glory in it but should have compassion" (H.A. Dobbs, MSOP, p.240). "Therefore if thine enemy
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hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:20-21).

- d. The men of the east would conquer Ammon and occupy their place, and enjoy the fruit of their labors. It is certain that everyone will reap what he sows. The Ammonites had rejoiced at Israel's downfall, but they would face the same catastrophe.
 - 1) Proverbs 26:27: "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 10:8: "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him."
 - 3) Galatians 6:7-8: "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."
2. Verses 5-7: "And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couchingplace for flocks: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped *thine* hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. Rabbah was the capital city of Ammon, but it would become the location of a stable for camels and a place for flocks to rest.
 - b. They had clapped their hands, stamped their feet, and rejoiced with their heart at Israel's misfortunes. God has the right to punish his people, but that does not give the enemy the right to rejoice. If the Lord will chastise his own, think what he will do to those who are not his own!
 - 1) Cf. Lamentations 2:15: "All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying*, Is this the city that *men* call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?"
 - 2) 1 Peter 4:17-18: For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

B. Ezekiel 25:8-11: The Punishment of Moab.

1. Verses 8-9: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah *is* like unto all the heathen; Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities *which are* on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Bethjeshimoth, Baalmeon, and Kiriathaim."
 - a. MOAB: Personal and national name and monument the nation left behind. The narrow strip of cultivable land directly east of the Dead Sea was known in biblical times as "Moab," and the people who lived there, as "Moabites." Moab is rolling plateau (averaging approximately 3,300 feet elevation), bounded on the west by the rugged escarpment which drops down to the Dead Sea (itself almost 1,300 feet below sea level), on the east by the desert, and running through it the steep Wady Mujib canyon (the Arnon River of biblical times). The Mujib/Arnon, which flows essentially east-west and enters the Dead Sea approximately mid-way along the latter's western shore, separates northern Moab from Moab proper. Relatively few springs appear on the Moabite plateau, and the waters of the Mujib/Arnon are virtually inaccessible because of the steepness of the river canyon. Still, the area is well watered by winter rains brought by winds from the Mediterranean. The porous soil holds enough of the moisture for the villagers to grow cereal crops and to find good pasturage for their sheep and goats. Moab's agricultural productivity is illustrated by the biblical passages pertaining to Ruth and King Mesha, surely the two best-known Moabites from the Bible. The Book

of Ruth opens with a time of famine in Judah; thus Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons emigrated to Moab where food was still available (Ruth 1:1-5). King Mesha, we are told, “was a sheep breeder; and he had to deliver annually to the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs, and the wool of a hundred thousand rams” (2 Kings 3:4 RSV). The chief cities of northern Moab were Hesbon, Medeba, and Dibon. Since this region was somewhat cut off from Moab proper by the Arnon, it was more vulnerable to international pressures and often changed hands during biblical times. In fact, the Ammonites made claim to all the territory as far south as the Arnon (Judg. 11:13), while the Book of Joshua makes the same claim for Israel (13:15-28). Other biblical passages which pertain to the region immediately north of the Arnon clearly recognize it as Moabite territory (Isa. 15; Jer. 48), as does the inscription of the Moabite Stone (see below). A crux passage for understanding the whole matter is Numbers 21:25-30, which explains that King Sihon of the Amorites took northern Moab from the Moabites and that the Israelites took it from him. Unfortunately, this passage is open to various interpretations (especially when the essentially parallel version in Jeremiah 48:45-47 is taken into account). Moab proper was more isolated from the outside world, bounded by the Dead Sea escarpment on the west, the desert on the east, the Mujib/Arnon on the north, and a second river canyon on the south—called today Wady el-Hesa, probably, but not certainly, the River Zered of biblical times (Num. 21:12). The chief cities of Moab proper were Kir-hareseth (present-day Kerak) and a place called Ar Moab (possibly to be identified with the present-day village of Rabbah approximately nine miles northeast of Kerak). Second Kings 3 describes a military campaign undertaken by King Jehoram of Israel and supported by King Jehoshaphat of Judah which penetrated Moab proper and culminated in a siege of Kir-hareseth. The siege was lifted when King Mesha of Moab sacrificed his oldest son on the city wall. In addition to biblical passages such as those indicated above and occasional references in Assyrian texts, our major source of information about ancient Moab is the so-called Moabite Stone. This stone, which bears an inscription from the reign of the same King Mesha mentioned in 2 Kings 3, was discovered in 1868, near the ruins of ancient Dibon, by a German missionary. Known also as The Mesha Inscription, the monument reports the major accomplishments of King Mesha’s reign. He boasts especially of having recovered Moabite independence from Israel and of having restored Moabite control over northern Moab. Since they were neighbors, the history of the Moabites was intertwined with that of Israel. Moreover, the Israelites regarded the Moabites as close relatives, as implied by Genesis 19:30-38. We hear of peaceful interchange as well as conflicts between the Israelites and Moabites already during the time of the Judges. The story of Ruth illustrates peaceful relations, while the episode of Ehud and Eglon illustrates conflict (Judg. 3:12-30). Saul is reported to have fought against the Moabites (1 Sam. 14:47). David, a descendant of the Moabitess Ruth according to the biblical genealogies (Ruth 4:18-22), placed his parents under the protection of the king of Moab while he was on the run from Saul (1 Sam. 22:3-4). Yet he is reported to have defeated the Moabites in battle later on and to have executed two-thirds of the Moabite prisoners by arbitrary selection (2 Sam. 8:2). Moab was represented among Solomon’s wives, and the worship of Chemosh, the Moabite god, accommodated in Solomon’s Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:1-8). Our most detailed information about Moabite-Israelite relations comes from the mid-ninth century B.C., the time of the Omri dynasty of Israel and King Mesha of Moab (1 Kings 16:15-2 Kings 10:18). At this point the inscription of the Moabite Stone supplements the biblical record. We learn that Omri conquered northern Moab and gained some degree of domination over Moab proper. Ahab continued Omri’s policies. King Mesha ascended the throne of Moab approximately midway during Ahab’s reign, however, and eventually succeeded in throwing off the Israelite yoke. Mesha apparently began the struggle for Moabite independence during the turbulent years following Ahab’s death (2 Kings 1:1). Ahaziah, who succeeded Ahab to the throne of Israel, was unable to respond to Mesha’s challenge because of an accident which led to his premature death (2 Kings 1). Later, when Jehoram followed Ahaziah to the throne of Israel and attempted to restore Israelite control over Mesha, he was unsuccessful (2 Kings 3). Eventually, by 700 B.C., Moab fell under the shadow of Assyria as did Israel, Judah, Ammon, and the other petty Syro-

Palestinian Kingdoms. Thus Moab and Moabite kings are mentioned in the records of Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon. Also, prophetic oracles such as Amos 2:1-3; Isaiah 15; and Jeremiah 48 pertain to these last, waning years of the Moabite kingdom [Maxwell Miller, Holman PC Dictionary].

- b. “Moab, Seir, and Ammon were contiguous countries, stretching in one line from Gilead on the north to the Red Sea. They therefore naturally acted in concert, and in joint hostility to Judea” (JFB, p.299).
 - c. The sin of Moab was identical to that of Ammon: their exultation over Israel’s woes and malice in their hearts for God’s people. The Moabites descended from Moab, the offspring of Lot by one of his two daughters; Ammon was his descendant through the other daughter (Gen. 19:30-38).
2. Verses 10-11: “Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.”
 - a. Keil (Vol. I, pp.365f) reports that the Ammonites continued to exist for a time; but they were conquered by Babylon five years after the fall of Jerusalem. They were later attacked by Judas the Maccabaeus (1 Macc. 5:6,30-43). However, the Moabites faded from history many years earlier than did the Ammonites.
 - b. Neither the Ammonites nor the Moabites have any identifiable progeny on earth today. While the Jews are known all over the world, have you ever heard of an Ammonite lawyer or a Moabite banker?
 - c. The fact that these two nations have vanished from the earth, in keeping with God’s prophecy given through Ezekiel, is evidence for the inspiration of the Bible.

C. Ezekiel 25:12-14: The Punishment of Edom.

1. Verse 12-13: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword.”
 - a. EDOM: The area southeast and southwest of the Dead Sea, on opposite sides of the Arabah, was known as Edom in biblical times and was the home of the Edomites. The name “Edom” derives from a Semitic root which means “red” or “ruddy” and characterizes the red sandstone terrain of much of the area in question. Moreover, the Edomite area was largely “wilderness”—semi-desert, not very conducive to agriculture—and many of the inhabitants were semi-nomads. Thus the boundaries of Edom would have been rather ill-defined. Yet not all of Edom was wilderness; the vicinity of present-day Tafleeh and Buseireh, east of the Arabah, is fairly well watered, cultivable land, and would have boasted numerous villages during Old Testament times. This would have been the center of Edomite population. Buseireh is situated on the ruins of ancient Bozrah, the capital of Edom. Note that the modern name, “Buseireh,” preserves memory of the ancient one, “Bozrah.” Most of the biblical passages pertaining to Edom refer to this Edomite center east of the Arabah. Isaiah 63:1, for example, speaks of one that “... cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, ... glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength.” (See also Jer. 49:22; Amos 1:11-12). Yet there are other passages which presuppose that the territory west of the Arabah, south of the Judean hill country and separating Judah from the Gulf of Aqaba, was also part of Edom. See especially the description of Judah’s boundary in Numbers 34:3-4 and Joshua 15:1-3, where Judah’s south side is described as extending “even to the border of Edom the wilderness of Zin.” Certain of the tribal groups which ranged this wilderness area south of Judah are listed in the Edomite genealogy of Genesis 36. In New Testament times, even the southern end of the Judean hill country (south of approximately Hebron) was known officially as Idumea (Edom). The “land of Seir” seems to be synonymous with Edom in some passages (Gen. 32:3; 36:8; Judg. 5:4). Egyptian texts from about 1300 to 1100 B.C. know of *Shasu* (apparently semi-nomadic tribes) from Seir and Edom. “Teman” also is used in apposition to
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Edom in at least one biblical passage (Amos 1:12), but normally refers to a specific district of Edom and possibly to a town by that name. One of Job's visitors was Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 2:11; compare Ezek. 25:13). The Israelites regarded the Edomites as close relatives, even more closely related to them than the Ammonites or Moabites. Specifically, they identified the Ammonites and Moabites as descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew, but the Edomites as descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother (Gen. 19:30-36; 36). Thus Edom occasionally is referred to as a "brother" to Israel (Amos 1:11-12). Edomites seem not to have been barred from worship in the Jerusalem Temple with the same strictness as the Ammonites and Moabites (Deut. 23:3-8). Yet, as is often the case with personal relations, the closest relative can be a bitter enemy. According to the biblical writers, enmity between Israel and Edom began already with Jacob and Esau (when the former stole the latter's birthright) and was exacerbated at the time of the Israelite Exodus from Egypt (when the Edomites refused the Israelites passage through their land). Be that as it may, much of the conflict also had to do with the fact that Edom was a constant threat to Judah's frontier, and moreover blocked Judean access to the Gulf of Aqaba. Both Saul and David conducted warfare with the Edomites—probably frontier wars fought in the "wilderness" area southwest of the Dead Sea (1 Sam. 14:47-48; 2 Sam. 8:13-14). David achieved a decisive victory in the valley of salt, probably just southwest of Beersheba where the ancient name still is preserved in modern Arabic wadi el-Milk. Apparently this secured Davidic control of the Edomite area west of the Arabah as well as access to the Gulf of Aqaba. Thus we read that Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber and sent them to distant places for exotic goods. Later Hadad of the royal Edomite line returned from Egypt and became an active adversary to Solomon. This would have involved Edomite attacks on Solomon's caravans which passed through traditionally Edomite territory from Ezion-geber to Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:14-22). Apparently Judah gained the upper hand against Edom again during the reign of Jehoshaphat. Once again we read of a Judean attempt (unsuccessful this time) to undertake a shipping venture from Ezion-geber (1 Kings 22:47-50). Edom regained independence from Judah under Joram, who succeeded Jehoshaphat to the throne (2 Kings 8:20-22). A later Judean king, Amaziah, is reported to have defeated the Edomites again in the valley of salt and then to have pursued ten thousand survivors to "the top of the rock" from which they were thrown down and dashed to pieces (2 Chron. 25:11-12). Possibly the Hebrew term *sela* translated "rock" in this passage should be understood as a proper name, "Sela." If so, then it seems reasonable to locate the incident with the craggy terrain just northwest of the Edomite capital Bosrah, where still today an Arab village bears a corresponding name (as-Sil'). An alternate candidate for biblical Sela favored by some scholars, Umm el-Biyara at Petra, seems too far south from either the valley of salt or the center of Edomite population. Conflict between Judah and Edom and efforts on the part of Judean kings to exploit the commercial possibilities of the Gulf of Aqaba continued (2 Kings 14:22; 16:6; 2 Chron. 26:1-2; 28:17) until eventually the Edomites, like the other peoples and petty kingdoms of Syria-Palestine, fell under the shadow of the major eastern empires—the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, finally the Persians and the Greeks. Some scholars hold that the Edomites aided the Babylonians in their attacks on Jerusalem in 597 and 586 B.C. and then took advantage of the Judeans in their helpless situation. This would explain, for example, the bitter verbal attacks on Edom in passages such as Jeremiah 49:7-22 and the Book of Obadiah. Yet there is no clear evidence to support this view. By New Testament times a people of Arabic origin known as the Nabateans had established a commercial empire with its center in the formerly Edomite territory east of the Arabah. Their chief city was Petra and the whole region southeast of the Dead Sea had come to be known as Nabatea. Only the formerly Edomite territory west of the Arabah was still known as Idumea (Edom). Herod the Great was of Idumean ancestry [Holman PC Dictionary].

- b. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau. They developed into a nation before Israel, and had dukes (kings, princes) over them many years before the Israelites (Gen. 36).
 2. Verse 14: "And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the
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Lord GOD.”

- a. They had been enemies of Israel through the years, so God would wreak his vengeance on them. They appeared to get away with their hatred of Israel, but God always has the last word.
- b. We are told that Judas Maccabeus subdued the Edomites and that John Hyrcanus forced them to be circumcised, and incorporated them into the Israelite nation. The Herodian family were descendants of the Edomite race.
- c. As with the Ammonites and Moabites, they cannot be found today. They were absorbed by other nations or were all destroyed.

D. Ezekiel 25:15-17: The Punishment of Philistia.

1. Verses 15-16: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy *it* for the old hatred; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast.”
 - a. PHILISTINES: One of the rival groups the Israelites encountered as they settled the land of Canaan. References to the Philistines appear in the Old Testament as well as other ancient Near Eastern writings. *Philistine* refers to a group of people who occupied and gave their name to the southwest part of Palestine. Ancient Egyptian records from the time of Merneptah and Ramses III referred to them as the “prst.” Ancient Assyrian records include references to the Philistines in the terms *Philisti* and *Palastu*. The origin and background of the Philistines had not been completely clarified. Ancient Egyptian records include the “prst” as part of a larger movement of people known as the Sea Peoples, who invaded Egypt about 1188 B.C. by land and by sea, battling the forces of Ramses III, who, according to Egyptian records, defeated them. The Sea Peoples, a massive group that originated in the Aegean area, included the Tjeker, the Skekelesh, the Denyen, the Sherden, and the Weshwesh as well as the “prst” or Pelesti, the biblical Philistines. As they moved eastward from the Aegean region, the Sea Peoples made war with people in their path including the Hittites in Anatolia and the inhabitants at sites in North Syria such as those at the site of Ugarit. According to biblical references, the homeland of the Philistines was Caphtor (Amos 9:7; Jer. 47:4). Philistines are first mentioned in the patriarchal stories (Gen. 21:32, 34), a reference which some suggest is anachronistic and others suggest refers to the migrations of an Aegean colony in the patriarchal period. The most dramatic phase of Philistine history begins in the period of the Judges when the Philistines were the principal enemy of and the major political threat to Israel. This threat is first seen in the stories of Samson (Judg. 13-16). The threat intensified as the Philistines encroached on the territory of the tribe of Dan ultimately forcing Dan to move north (Judg. 18:11, 29). The threat reached crisis proportions in the battle of Ebenezer (1 Sam. 4:1-18), when the Israelites were soundly defeated and the ark of the covenant, brought over from Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:3-4), was captured. During the time of Samuel, the Israelites defeated the Philistines at times (1 Sam. 7:5-11; 14:16-23), but, generally speaking, their advance against the Israelites continued. Saul not only failed to check their intrusion into Israelite territory but in the end lost his life fighting the Philistines at Mount Giboa (1 Sam. 31:1-13). David finally checked the Philistine advance at Baal-perazim (2 Sam. 5:17-25). Several features of Philistine life and culture are reflected in the Old Testament. Politically, the Philistines had a highly organized city-state system comprised of five towns in southwest Palestine: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron (1 Sam. 6:17). Each of the city-states was ruled by a “lord” (1 Sam. 6:18), a kinglike figure. Gath was perhaps the major city of this Philistine pentapolis, and as such, served as the hub of the city-state system. The Philistines were experts in metallurgy, the skill of processing metals (1 Sam. 13:19-23). Philistine expertise in this area put the Israelites at a decided disadvantage in their struggles with the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:22). See Minerals and Metals. The Philistines had a highly trained military organization. Sea and land battles between the Egyptians and Sea Peoples are depicted on large panels at the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu in Thebes. The Philistines were

in ships designed with a curved keel and the head of a bird on the bow. Philistine warriors wore a plumed or feathered headdress, a feature which added height to their physical appearance. On land, the Philistines were equipped with horses and chariots, numerous foot soldiers, and archers (1 Sam. 13:5; 31:3). The armor of Philistine soldiers included bronze helmets, coats of mail, leg protectors, spears, and shields (1 Sam. 17:5-7). The story of Goliath indicates that at times the Philistines used individual combat (1 Sam. 17). Most likely, the Philistine warrior went through a cursing ritual just prior to the confrontation (1 Sam. 17:43). David, who recognized the military expertise of the Philistines, selected Cherethites (Cretans) and Pelethites (Philistines) (2 Sam. 20:23) for his palace guard or mercenary army. This segment of the army provided protection for David and his family during times of revolt. See Arms and Armor. While our information on Philistine religion is limited, three Philistine gods are mentioned in the Old Testament—Dagon, Ashtoreth, and Baalzebub. Dagon appears to be the chief god of the Philistines. Temples of Dagon were located at Gaza (Judg. 16:21-30) and Ashdod (1 Sam. 5:1-7). Ashtoreth, the fertility goddess of the Canaanites, was most likely adopted by the Philistines. Apparently, the Philistines had Ashtoreth temples at Beth-shan (1 Sam. 31:10 NIV) and, according to Herodotus, at Ashkelon (Herodotus I. 105). Baalzebub, the Philistine god whose name means “lord of the flies,” was the god of Ekron (2 Kings 1:1-16). Most likely the Philistines worshiped Baalzebub as a god who averted pestilence or plagues. Archaeological excavations have brought to light many features of the material culture of the Philistines. The distinctive Philistine pottery which reflects styles and designs adopted and adapted from other cultures has been found at many sites. The major types of Philistine pottery are the so-called beer jug with a spouted strainer on the side, the crater bowl, the stirrup jar, and the horn-shaped vessel. The pottery was often decorated with red and black painted designs including geometric designs often consisting of circles and cross halving and stylized birds. Clay coffins were used by the Philistines for burials. These distinctive coffins, called “anthropoid coffins” because they were made in the shape of a human body, had lids decorated with the physical features of the upper part of a human being, features such as a head, arms, and hands. Recent excavations especially at the sites of Ashdod, tel-Qasile, tel Jemmeh, and tel Mor have added significantly to our understanding of the Philistine culture. The excavations at tel Qasile revealed a Philistine iron smeltery, a Philistine temple, offering stands, and other vessels used in religious rituals as well as many other artifacts and installations. A new series of excavations is under way at Ashkelon. The current excavations will add yet a new dimension to our understanding of the Philistines. The political influence of the Philistines was most prominent between 1200 and 1000 B.C., but their influence continues through the use of the name Palestine, a name derived from “Philistine.” [LaMoine DeVries, Holman PC Dictionary].

- b. The Philistines were perhaps the Israelites’ most persistent adversary. They were a problem when Israel first entered Canaan after their wilderness experiences. They were a thorn in the flesh during the time of the Judges; Saul and David fought them. There was a long-running hatred on the part of the Philistines toward the Israelites.
 - c. Because of their intense hatred and opposition for his people, God vows to stretch out his hand against them, to cut them off and destroy them.
2. Verse 17: “And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.”
- a. “The execution of the vengeance threatened by God began in the Chaldean period, in which Gaza was attacked by Pharaoh, and, judging from Jer. 47, the whole of Philistia was laid waste by the Chaldeans.” Keil, Vol. I, p.369).
 - b. They would finally learn the truth that the God of Israel is the God of all Creation, but it would be too late to do them any good. They would learn this great lesson when he brought about their destruction.
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EZEKIEL 26

A. Ezekiel 26:1-6: Tyre Shall be Broken.

1. Verses 1-3: "And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken *that was* the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, *now* she is laid waste: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up."
- a. SIDON AND TYRE: Phoenician cities located on the coastal plain between the mountains of Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea (Gen. 10:15). Sidon and Tyre were ancient cities, having been founded long before the Israelites entered the land of Canaan. Extrabiblical sources first mention Sidon before 2000 B.C. and Tyre just after 2000 B.C. While Sidon seems to have been the most dominant of the two cities during the early part of their histories, Tyre assumed this role in the latter times. Both cities were known for their maritime exploits and as centers of trade. One of Tyre's most coveted exports was purple dye. Joshua could not conquer the territory (Josh. 13:3-4). Israel had relations with the two cities, but especially with Tyre. David employed Tyrian stonemasons and carpenters and used cedars from that area in building a palace. (2 Sam. 5:11). The construction of the Temple in Jerusalem during Solomon's reign depended heavily on the materials and craftsmen from Tyre. About 870 B.C., Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of the Phoenician king, bringing Baal worship to Israel's court. Ezekiel 28 characterizes the king of Tyre as the ultimate example of pride. Under Roman rule, the two cities were important ports of trade, but they did not enjoy the dominance they previously held. Jesus spent time in Tyre and Sidon and in contrast to the prophets' attitude toward the cities, He contrasted them with the Jews as examples of faith (Matt. 11:20-22). Paul spent seven days in Tyre after his third missionary journey (Acts 21:3-4). (Holman PC Bible Dictionary, Scott Langston).
- b. "Tyre, the principal Phoenician seaport, is located on the Mediterranean, twenty-five miles south of Sidon and thirty-five miles north of Mount Carmel. In ancient times a distinction was made between the mainland port city, Old Tyre or *Ushu* (in Assyrian texts), and the island city of Tyre (Assyrian *Surru*). Alexander the Great laid siege to the island city for seven months (332 B.C.) And captured it only after he built a mole to connect the island with the mainland. This change in the topography of Phoenicia was permanent, and Tyre is no longer an island.
 - 1) "The early history of Tyre is not known. During the Amarna Age its king, Abimilki, remained loyal to Egypt while charging that the king of Sidon had joined the Amorite Aziru in fomenting rebellion. When the Philistines plundered Sidon (*ca.* 1200 B.C.) many of its people fled to Tyre which became the principal Phoenician port in subsequent centuries.
 - 2) "In the days of the Israelite United Kingdom, Hiram of Tyre had friendly commercial relations with both David and Solomon (II Sam. 5:11; I Kings 5:1; I Chron. 14:1). Hiram provided building materials for the Jerusalem Temple (II Chron. 2:3-16) and Tyrians assisted in the building of the Temple. A man named Hiram (not the king) was responsible for the bronze work (I Kings 7:13-14).
 - 3) "Hiram of Tyre...during his reign the Tyrians built a great temple to their god Melkart, the Tyrian Baal whose name means 'king of the city,' and the goddess Astarte. Hiram also assisted Solomon in the development of the port of Ezion-geber for trade with the eastern shore of Africa and the Indian Ocean territories (I Kings 9:27-28). The age of Hiram was the golden age of Tyre, when her ships plied the Mediterranean carrying her Tyrian purple dyes, made from the murex shellfish, and her manufactured glass to the islands and coastlands of the eastern Mediterranean. During the ninth century B.C., Tyrians founded Carthage ('new town') in North Africa. Its legendary founder

was Dido, whose story Virgil gives in the Aeneid. The ninth century also saw Jezebel, a daughter of Ethbaal (Itobal) the Tyrian kingpriest, married to Ahab of Israel. The purpose of the marriage was assuredly political, serving to cement relations between Tyre and Israel, but Jezebel's Baalism precipitated a major religious crisis in Israel.

- 4) "With the rise of Assyrian power in western Asia, Tyre was continually threatened. Usually she maintained a degree of autonomy by paying tribute. In 722 B.C., however, Tyre along with Samaria fell to Sargon II.
 - 5) "With the decline of Assyrian power, Tyre regained her autonomy and her sea trade prospered. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre, and finally she fell to the Babylonians. Tyre continued to be a major port city in the centuries that followed. Alexander, by building a mole, was able to subdue Tyre, but the city soon recovered. In Roman times Herod I rebuilt the main temple of Tyre.
 - 6) "The principal ruins of Tyre date to Crusader times. Many coins minted at Tyre from the fifth century B.C. onward bear testimony of the greatness of Tyre in the lands of the eastern Mediterranean. Excavations since 1921 have traced some of the early foundations of the city" (Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Biblical World*, pp.590f).
- c. In the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's exile, the message which follows was given to Ezekiel. This was the year in which Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed after the 18-month siege. We are given the year and the day of the month, but the month is not identified. Some scholars assume that the month was in the text originally, but that there has been a corruption of the text due to a copyist's oversight. It may be, however, that either the first month of the year or the month Jerusalem fell. If the first month, then the statement of verse two is a prophetic preview of the reaction of Tyre to the news of its fall.
 - d. "The number of the month being omitted, many suppose 'the month' to mean the month when Jerusalem was taken (the rebirth month), called 'the month,' as being so well known. The capture of the city is known to have taken place on 'the ninth day of the fourth month' and its destruction on 'the seventh day of the fifth month.' This prophecy therefore preceded by a few days the capture of the city. The condition of Jerusalem in the latter months of its siege was such that the Tyrians may well have exulted as though it had already fallen" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
 - e. Tyre had the same attitude toward Judah that the Ammonites and others had; they rejoiced when the city fell. For this evil disposition, they would likewise suffer destruction. Tyre operated a powerful deep-sea fleet, trading with many distant lands. With the fall of Jerusalem, they would not have the Jewish merchants as competitors. Verse two gives their reaction: "I shall be replenished." The point seems to be that they could now increase their wealth. They thought that they would now have open access to the rich land of the Israelites, and could use its produce as they willed.
 - f. Because of her rejoicing over the calamity that fell upon Jerusalem and Judah, Tyre would be made to pay dearly. They would reap what they had sown. It is never right or safe to rejoice over another's tragedy. If an enemy of the truth should suffer a disaster, although we would exult in the success of the truth, we should view his fall with sadness. If an enemy in the church should depart from the faith in sin or error, and subsequently suffer a catastrophe, our reaction ought to be one of grief; a brother has fallen; his soul is in jeopardy; and now he suffers. God affirmed his opposition to Tyre, and declared he would send many nations against them, who would dash against them as the waves dash against the shore.
2. Verses 4-7: "And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be *a place for* the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And her daughters which *are* in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
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- a. “The prophecy that Tyre would become a scraped rock and fishermen would spread their net there is remarkable. The original city was built on the mainland with rock substructure. It was a walled city and regarded as inaccessible. It took the powerful army of Nebuchadnezzar thirteen years to bring it down. The Babylonian, having destroyed the power of Tyre and carried away its treasures, left the city where it was, and the people continued to live there” (Dobbs, MSOP, p.249). The citizens left the destroyed city behind, and rebuilt the new Tyre on an island a short distance offshore.
- b. Many years later, Alexander the Great besieged this new Tyre, but in order to take the city, he found it necessary to build a causeway from the shore to the island on which the city was situated. He used the rubble of the old city, literally scraping up the dirt and debris from the original site. The prophecy of Ezekiel was fulfilled to the fullest degree.
- c. The “daughters” of Tyre would be slain in the field. This could be taken as a literal statement, or could be understood to refer to those who were served by Tyre’s ships. The point being made is clear, though the specific reference might be a little obscure to us.

B. Ezekiel 26:7-14: Nebuchadnezzar to Smite Tyre.

1. Verses 7-9: “For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee. And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers.”
 - a. God is very specific in revealing the destruction the city is to face. Nebuchadnezzar would come against them, entering the land from the north, bringing with him his army and chariots. He would build siege mounts, and use great engines to break down her walls; their towers would also be taken and destroyed.
 - b. The prophecy relates to old Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar conquered it; Alexander the Great conquered the new Tyre, which was situated on an island a short distance offshore.
 2. Verses 10-14: “By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be *a place* to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. A prophetic picture is given of the conquest of Tyre by the Chaldeans. There would be so many horses and chariots, the walls would shake; a breach would be made in the walls, and the chariots would force their way into the city; the people would be slain by the sword, and the defenders would be overcome.
 - b. The invaders would despoil the city of its riches; they would carry away their merchandise; they would tear down the walls and destroy the palaces of the rich; they would tear down the buildings, knocking down the stones and timbers to the ground. This debris would later be used by the Greeks to build a causeway out to the new Tyre, on the island offshore.
 - c. Following the conquest by the Babylonians, there would be no singing and playing of the harp in Tyre; there would no cause for rejoicing.
 - d. Once again (verse 14), the Lord declares that old Tyre would be made like the top of a rock. There would be nothing left. This pictures the site of the old city after the Greeks had scraped up all the
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debris to be used in constructing the causeway. The old city was built on the edge of the sea, so in being thrown down, some of the stones and timbers would tumble into the water.

C. Ezekiel 26:15-21: Tyre to Vanish.

1. Verses 15-18: “Thus saith the Lord GOD to Tyrus; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at *every* moment, and be astonished at thee. And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, *that wast* inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city, which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror *to be* on all that haunt it! Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that *are* in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.”
 - a. The destruction of Tyre would have adverse effects on others. Their trading partners would obviously be negatively affected. The Phoenicians had jealously guarded the locations of their distant trading fields, so those places would suffer when the Phoenicians stopped coming. They ruled the sea, and were a terror to anyone who sought to compete with them.
 - b. The picture given of those adversely affected by the demise of old Tyre is that of mourning. The princes of the faraway places where the Tyrians traded are depicted as coming down from the throne and mourning the loss; they would clothe themselves in mourning attire, and sit on the ground, lamenting for Tyre.
 2. Verses 19-21: “For thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living; I will make thee a terror, and thou *shalt be no more*: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. The “great waters” that would cover Tyre is a figurative depiction of the great hordes of Babylonians who would besiege and conquer the city; they would sweep over Tyre as the waves of the sea sweep over what is in their path.
 - b. The city would disappear from view, as the souls of the dead are seen no more on earth. She would not be found again. “This is literally true; there is not the smallest vestige of the ancient Tyre, that which was erected on the main land. Even the ground seems to have been washed away; and the new Tyre is in nearly a similar state. I think this prophecy must be extended to the whole duration of Tyre. If it now be found to be in the state here described, it is sufficient to show the truth of the prophecy. And now it is found precisely in the state which the above prophetic declarations, taken according to the letter, point out! No word of God can ever fall to the ground. Notwithstanding the former destructions, Tyre was a place of some consequence in the time of St. Paul. There was a church there, (see Acts 21:3,4)...” (Clarke, pp.494f).
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EZEKIEL 27

A. Ezekiel 27:1-11: The Glory of Tyre will be like the Wreck of a Ship.

1. Verses 1-7: "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus; And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, *which art* a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O Tyrus, thou hast said, *I am* of perfect beauty. Thy borders *are* in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have made all thy *ship* boards of fir trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee. *Of* the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches *of* ivory, *brought* out of the isles of Chittim. Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail; blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was that which covered thee."
 - a. This passage is a lamentation for Tyre, in view of her demise. The Lord speaks of the destruction of this pagan city and the punishment of its sinful population as an accomplished fact. God had so ordered the outcome that it was the same as done.
 - b. "Tyre itself considers that she is perfect in her beauty, partly on account of her strong position in the sea, and partly because of her splendid edifices. In the description which follows of this beauty and glory, from ver. 4 onwards, Tyre is depicted allegorically as a beautiful ship, splendidly built and equipped throughout, and its destruction is afterwards represented as a shipwreck occasioned by the east wind (vers. 27ff)" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.384f).
 - c. The ship was constructed from the finest wood; the trees of Lebanon were used, as well as the oaks of Bashan (the oars), and ivory was used in the benches (evidently the benches on which the rowers were seated). Fine linen was used for the sail.
2. Verses 8-11: "The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise *men*, O Tyrus, *that* were in thee, were thy pilots. The ancients of Gebal and the wise *men* thereof were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. They of Persia and of Lud and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness. The men of Arvad with thine army *were* upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect."
 - a. The sailors, soldiers, and other workers were from various cities, including Zidon (Sidon) and Arvad (a small island near Phoenicia, now called Ruad).
 - b. The wise men of the nation were her pilots; they were misled by those wise men. Men from Persia, Lud, and Phut were in their army. These were mercenary soldiers hired from foreign countries. Mercenaries are not known for dedication to a cause; they fight for money. They could not depend on this kind of soldier for solid defense.

B. Ezekiel 27:12-25: Tyre's Merchant Trade was Far-flung.

1. Verses 12-18: "Tarshish *was* thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all *kind* of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they *were* thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market. They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules. The men of Dedan *were* thy merchants; many isles *were* the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee *for* a present horns of ivory and ebony. Syria *was* thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. Judah, and the land of Israel, they *were* thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm. Damascus *was* thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool."
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- a. TARSHISH (*Tahr shihsh*): Personal and place name of uncertain derivation, either meaning, “yellow jasper,” as in the Hebrew of Exodus 28:20; Ezekiel 28:13, or else derived from an Akkadian term meaning, “smelting plant.” 1. Son of Javan (Gen. 10:4; 1 Chron. 1:7) and ancestor of an Aegean people. 2. Benjaminite warrior (1 Chron. 7:10). 3. One of seven leading officials of King Ahasuerus of Persia (Esth. 1:14). This name possibly means “greedy one” in Old Persian. 4. Geographic designation, most likely of Tartessus at the southern tip of Spain but possibly of Tarsus in Cilisia. Jonah sailed for Tarshish, the far limit of the western world from the Mediterranean port of Joppa in his futile attempt to escape God’s call (Jonah 1:3). Tarshish traded in precious metals with Tyre, another Mediterranean port (Isa. 23:1; Jer. 10:9; Ezek. 27:12). 5. References to Tarshish in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles suggest a non-geographic meaning. Solomon’s (1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron. 9:21) and Jehoshaphat’s (1 Kings 22:48; 2 Chron. 20:36) fleets were based at Ezion-Geber on the Red Sea. Solomon’s cargo suggests east African trading partners. Thus “ships of Tarshish” may designate seagoing vessels like those of Tarshish or else ships bearing metal cargo like those of Tarshish (compare Isa. 2:16 where ships of Tarshish parallels beautiful crafts). (Holman PC Bible Dictionary).
- b. “Andalucía was probably the biblical Tarshish (from Tartessus, an ancient kingdom on the southwestern coast of the Iberian Peninsula). The Carthaginians settled here in the 5th century bc. The district was conquered by the Romans, who called it Baetica (from Boetis, the Roman name of the Guadalquivir River). Under the Roman Empire the region was very prosperous. The country was overrun by the Vandals early in the 5th century. From the Vandals the region took the name Vandalusia, which, in later centuries, was corrupted into Andalucía. The Vandals were succeeded by the Visigoths, who ruled until the Arab invasion of 711, after which Andalucía became the center of the Saracen and Moorish civilization. The cities of Granada, Córdoba, Seville, and Jaén were seats of Islamic culture, industry, and commerce. Students from all parts of Europe attended the great Muslim universities. Andalucía, established as a Moorish emirate in 756, later developed into the caliphate of Córdoba (see Córdoba). Lower Andalucía, corresponding to the lower reaches of the Guadalquivir, was taken from the Moors in 1212. The Upper Andalucía survived as the kingdom of Granada (see Granada) until 1492, when it was conquered by the sovereigns of Castile and Aragón, Ferdinand V and Isabella. From 1516 the history of Andalucía merges with that of the united kingdom of Spain. Area, 87,599 sq km (33,822 sq mi). Population (2001) 7,357,558" [© 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved].
- c. This material describes the commerce carried on by Tyre, as they traded among many nations. “The enumeration of the different peoples, lands, and cities, which carried on trade with Tyre, commences with Tarshish (Tartessus) in the extreme west, then turns to the north, passes through the different lands of Anterior Asia and the Mediteranean to the remotest north-east, and ends by mentioning Tarshish again, to round off the list. But the lands and peoples, which are mentioned in vers. 5-11 as furnishing produce and manufacturers for the building of Tyre, viz. Egypt and the tribes of Northern Africa, are left out. To avoid wearisome uniformity in the enumeration, Ezekiel has used interchangeably the synonymous words which the language possessed for trade, besides endeavouring to give life to the description by a variety of turns of expression” (Keil, Vol. I, pp.391f).
2. Verses 19-25: “Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market. Dedan *was* thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these *were they* thy merchants. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they *were* thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, *and* Chilmad, *were* thy merchants. These *were* thy merchants in all sorts of *things*, in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise. The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market: and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.”
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- a. Mention is made in verse nineteen to their “fairs.” In the ancient days, merchants traveled by caravan from country-to-country, selling and buying; some of them reportedly amassed great fortunes. These sea-going merchants likewise set up fairs, as they traveled from one port to another, amassing fortunes that enriched Tyre.
- b. With the acquisition of wealth, there is the increased danger of sin. When one has too much time on his hands, the devil will surely set up a “workshop.” There is, of course, danger in being rich or being poor. "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*" (Prov. 30:8-9).
- c. Cassia was a spice; calamus was an aromatic root.

C. Ezekiel 27: 26-36: Mourning for Tyre.

1. Verses 26-31: “Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that *are* in thee, and in all thy company which *is* in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, *and* all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes: And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart *and* bitter wailing.”
 - a. In Palestine, the east wind brought disaster. It was characterized by gusts, and was very hot and dry, coming as it did from the desert east of Palestine. As the east wind devastated the crops of Canaan, so the east wind spoken of in verse twenty-six brought calamity to the ship of Tyre. “Like a ship broken in pieces by the storm, Tyre with all its glory sinks into the depths of the sea” (Keil, Vol. I, p.402).
 - b. “The ruin of this wealthy and powerful metropolis of the commerce of the world produces the greatest consternation among all who sail upon the sea, so that they forsake their ships, as if they were no longer safe in them, and leaving them for the land, bewail the fall of Tyre with deepest lamentation....For the purpose of depicting the lamentation as great and bitter in the extreme, Ezekiel groups together all the things that were generally done under such circumstances, viz. covering the head with dust (cf. Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; and Job 2:12) and ashes...shaving a bald place...putting on sackcloth; loud, bitter weeping...and singing a mournful dirge...” (Keil, Vol. I, p.403).
 2. Verses 32-36: “And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, *saying*, What *city is* like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. In the time *when* thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in *their* countenance. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt be* any more.”
 - a. “Tyre satisfied peoples and enriched kings with its wares, not only by purchasing from them and paying for their productions with money or barter, but also by the fact that the Tyrians gave a still higher value to the raw material by the labour which they bestowed upon them....But now Tyre with its treasures and inhabitants has sunk in the depths of the sea....All the inhabitants of the islands and their kings, *i.e.* the inhabitants of the (coast of the) Mediterranean and its islands, will be thrown into consternation at the fall of Tyre; and (ve. 36) the merchants among the nations, *i.e.* the foreign nations, the rivals of Tyre in trade, will hiss thereat; in other words, give utterance to malicious joy” (Keil, Vol. I, p.404).
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- b. “The mercantile greatness and the beauty of Tyre as to situation (v.3), only make her disastrous and utter downfall in the end the more awful by contrast. Sooner or later there is a termination to all the riches, honour, and beauty of the world; like a ship which has been built of the most costly materials, manned with the best mariners, and decked with snow-white sails and flaunting and gay pennants, but which, encountering agitated seas, is broken in pieces by the waves and tempests (vv. 4-9,26). Such was maritime Tyre; and such shall every people be at last whose greatness rests not on the strength of Jehovah” (JFB, pp.308f).
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EZEKIEL 28

A. Ezekiel 28:1-10: Destruction of Tyre's King.

1. Verses 1-6: "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart *is* lifted up, and thou hast said, I *am* a God, I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou *art* a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: Behold, thou *art* wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: By thy great wisdom *and* by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God."
- a. The wicked city of Tyre has had its fate foretold by the inspired prophet. Ezekiel is now directed to deliver a message of doom against the prince (king) of Tyre, thus making the ruin of the city complete.
- b. The reason for the disfavor into which the prince had fallen in Jehovah's sight is specified as pride. He had lifted himself up in his own estimation to a position of equality with God.
 - 1) "The prince of Tyrus' at the time was Ithobal, or Ithbaal II, the name implying his close connection with Baal, the Phoenician supreme god, whose representative he was" (JFB, p.309).
 - 2) "In Tyre especially the national and political development went hand in hand with the spread and propagation of its religion. 'The Tyrian state was the production and seat of its gods. He, the prince of Tyre, presided over this divine creation and divine seat; therefore he, the prince, was himself a god, a manifestation of the deity, having its work and home in the state of Tyre.' All heathen rulers looked upon themselves in this light; so that the king of Babylon is addressed in a similar manner in Isa. 14:13,14" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.406f).
 - 3) Isaiah 14:13-14: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."
- c. This prince had thought his citadel was impregnable, and that he was totally exempt from danger, even by the most powerful and determined enemy. He perceived that he was accountable to no one, that his power was absolute and independent. Clearly, he was a man of great arrogance and pride, the very sort of disposition that made him despotic.
- d. The prophet uses irony in verse 3, putting words in the mouth of the prince by which he exalts himself above even the prophet Daniel. Daniel was able to exercise a God-given power to reveal both the dream and its interpretation which Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed (Dan. 2). "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (Dan. 6:3).
- e. The financial, political, and military success which the prince of Tyre enjoyed had gone to his head. He figured that these achievements were due entirely to his own wisdom and superiority. Sports stars and entertainment figures have made similar assumptions. One rock and roll group once claimed to have greater popularity than Jesus Christ.
2. Verses 7-10: "Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of *them that are* slain in the midst of the seas. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I *am* God? but thou *shalt be* a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have

spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.”

- a. Because the prince had exalted himself to the status of deity, when he was only a mortal, God would bring terrible strangers from other nations, who would tarnish his splendor. These strangers would be from Babylon. Tyre was destroyed after a 13-year siege; and when the city was later rebuilt on an island off the coast, the Greeks came, built a causeway from the mainland, conquered and destroyed the city again. Those who know of the prophecy (Ezek. 26), and seeing the city rebuilt following the Chaldean assault, might think that God had failed to fulfill his threat; but after the Grecians came, God’s promise was seen to have been executed.
- b. The prince is asked whether he shall still claim to be God when his slayer is about to take his life. Such a claim would be met by contempt. He would surely be put to death; God had decreed it. He would face an ignominious death; he would be unhonored and unmourned in death.
- c. “The instruments of the punishment would be the Chaldeans whom we do not find mentioned among the nations and countries that traded with Tyre (chapter 27). If any of those nations had been brought against it, they would have had some compassion upon it, for old acquaintance sake; but the strangers will have none. They are people of a strange language which the king of Tyre himself, wise as he is, perhaps understands not” (David B. Jones, MSOP, p.497).

B. Ezekiel 28:11-19: Lamentation for Tyre’s King.

1. Verses 11-14: “Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.”
 - a. This section comprises a lamentation for the king of Tyre. It begins by picturing him as he saw himself. In his pride, the prince of Tyre thought he was the very epitome of beauty and wisdom, the sum total of that which is desirable in wisdom and beauty. In an earlier verse, God described him as thinking there was no secret that could be hidden from his perception.
 - b. “...Paradise is brought into comparison, not on account of the historical significance which it bears to the human race in relation to the plan of salvation, but simply as the most glorious land in all the earthly creation. The prince of Tyre, placed in the pleasant land, was also adorned with the greatest earthly glory. Costly jewels were his coverings, that is to say, they formed the ornaments of his attire. This feature in the pictorial description is taken from the splendour with which Oriental rulers are accustomed to appear, namely, in robes covered with precious, pearls, and gold” (Keil, Vol. I, p.411).
 - c. “The imagery employed by Ezekiel [in verse 14] as a priest is from the Jewish temple, wherein the cherubim covered or overshadowed the mercy-seat, as the King of Tyre, a demigod in his own esteem, *extended his protection* over the interests of Tyre. The cherub—an ideal compound of the highest kinds of animal existence, and the type of redeemed man in his ultimate state of perfection—is made the image of the King of Tyre...” (JFB, p.311).
 2. Verse 15: “Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”
 - a. Some scholars assert that the “day that thou was created” is a reference to the occasion on which the king mounted his throne. The reference to the musical instruments in verse 14 is adduced as evidence. But that seems a strained interpretation. The king was not created when he became king; he had been around for a considerable period of time. *Created* is not the expected word to be used in reference to a coronation of a new king. *Created* is from the same Hebrew word translated *created* in the
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following passages:

- 1) Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God **created** the heaven and the earth."
 - 2) Genesis 1:27: "So God **created** man in his *own* image, in the image of God **created** he him; male and female **created** he them."
 - 3) Malachi 2:10: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God **created** us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?"
- b. "The comparison of the king of Tyre to Adam in paradise is brought out still more prominently. As Adam was created sinless, so was the King of Tyre innocent in his conduct in the day of his creation, but only until perverseness was found in him. As Adam forfeited and lost the happiness conferred upon him through his fall, so did the king of Tyre forfeit his glorious position through unrighteousness and sin, and cause God to cast him from his eminence down to the ground" (David B. Jones, MSOP, p.501).
- c. The Bible teaches that we are born into this world entirely free from the contamination of sin:
- 1) The context of Romans 3:10-12 shows that the sinful people being described had **gone out of the way**, they had **become unprofitable**; they were not born that way, but they obtained that condition later. They could not have gone out of the way if they were not previously in the way. The "way" is a reference to being "right with God" (i.e., not being guilty of sin).
 - 2) There is a plain statement in the Old Testament that says that we do not inherit sin from our parents. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20). Since it is the case that a son cannot obtain guilt from his father, from where does he get it? It is certain that he did not get it from God, the Father of his spirit. The passage says that the wickedness for which he is held accountable is that which he has committed personally; and the righteousness for which a man is blessed is that which pertains to him. In other words, the eternal reward or punishment that will be given me is the one that pertains to me; I will not be punished for another man's sin, or I will not be blessed for someone else's faith. My guilt will be my own doing; and my righteousness depends on my obedience.
 - 3) God is the Father of our spirits (Heb. 12:9). We are the offspring of God (Acts 17:29). It is not the fleshly body that is the offspring of God (God is a spiritual being, John 4:24; cf. Luke 24:39). The only connection we have with Adam is through our parents, but the Bible affirms (Ezek. 18:20) that we do not inherit sin from our parents, thus we do not inherit sin from Adam. The only other source of inheriting sin is from God, but that is unthinkable. The irresistible conclusion is that we are not born guilty of sin.
 - 4) We obtain the guilt of sin when we personally violate God's will (1 John 3:4). The soul that sinneth, **it** shall die (suffer spiritual death). Ezekiel 18:20.
 - 5) Genesis 8:21: "And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done." The evil of an individual begins in his **youth**, not in his infancy. David was a *youth* when he fought Goliath (1 Sam. 17:33).
 - 6) Matthew 18:3: "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Those who enter the kingdom (who receive salvation), become like little children. If little children were born with the guilt of Adam's sin on their soul, the Lord could not have said that they were to be like little children. If a little child is born totally depraved, then we must become just like it (totally depraved) or it will not
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be possible for us to enter the kingdom. Compare: "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). Little children are pure and sinless since those who are citizens in God's kingdom have this condition after they are forgiven.

- 7) Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."
 - 8) Without faith is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). An infant cannot believe. It cannot repent; it cannot confess faith in Christ; and it does not need to be baptized.
 - 9) Because of the foregoing information, the statement in Psalm 51:5 does not teach that David was born with the guilt of sin. The Mosaic Law prohibited an Israelite from entering the congregation (to take full part with the rest of the people) if he was of illegitimate birth; after nine generations had passed, those of the tenth generation were then given full rights.
 - a) Deuteronomy 23:2-3: "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever."
 - b) Genesis 38:11-29 reports the illicit affair Judah had with Tamar, his daughter-in-law; Pharez, an ancestor of David and Jesus, came of this union. The sin David alluded to in Psalm 51:5 relates to the sin of Tamar with Judah. David represented the tenth generation from Judah, and was permitted to enter the congregation of the Lord as prescribed in Deuteronomy 23:2-3. For the genealogy of Judah to David, see Ruth 4:18-22 and Matthew 1:3-6.
3. Verses 16-19: "By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more."
- a. "Because of his accumulated wealth, the king fell into sin and violence. God pronounced a woe upon him, promising to cast him from the mountain and from the midst of stones (v.16). Casting the king from the mountain speaks of God's taking his authority from him, and while at one time no one could approach him because of God's protection (stones of fire), now God himself will approach him and destroy him. The Lord promises to bring him low to the ground and to such a degree that those who know him and Tyre will be astonished. The Lord also promises to bring Tyre so low she will never be again (v.19)" (Jones, *ibid*, p.501).
 - b. "Matthew Henry makes these interesting points concerning the folly of the king: (1) He attributed the increase of his wealth to himself and not to the providence of God, forgetting who gave him the power to get wealth; (2) He thought himself a wise man because he was a rich man; whereas a fool may have an estate (Eccl. 2:19)...(3) His heart was lifted up because of his riches, because of the increase of his wealth, which made him so haughty and secure, so insolent and imperious, and which set his heart as the heart as a god" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, McDonald Publishing Co., McLean, VA, Vol. II, p.588; quoted by Jones, *ibid.*, pp.496f).
 - c. The citizens of Tyre had filled their city with violence, for which the king, as head of state, is held responsible. He was personally accountable for the multitude of iniquities committed by which he defiled his *sanctuaries*. His merchant trade was likewise contaminated by sinful practices. Therefore,
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he would be removed from his lofty position, and would be appropriately punished, according to the preceding prophecy.

C. Ezekiel 28:20-26: Sidon is to be Punished.

1. Verses 20-23: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. "The threatening word against Sidon is very brief, and couched in general terms, because as a matter of fact the prophecy against Tyre involved the announcement of the fall of Sidon, which was dependent upon it....Sidon received a special word of God simply for the purpose of making up the number of the heathen nations mentioned to the significant number seven. The word of God against Sidon brings to a close the cycle of predictions of judgment directed against those heathen nations which had given expression to malicious pleasure at the overthrow of the kingdom of Judah" (Keil, Vol. I, pp.425f).
 - b. 1 Kings 16:30-31: "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him." The influence of the Sidonians upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, through Jezebel, upon Ahab, who contaminated the nation with Baal worship, was truly awful. Only seven thousand in the entire nation had refused to worship this false god (1 Kings 19:18).
 - c. When they experienced the affliction of pestilence and blood in her streets, the Sidonians would begin to understand the awesome greatness of Jehovah. He was not a lifeless idol, but is the Living God. The penalty they would suffer would be at the hand of unidentified invaders.
2. Verses 24-26: "And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor *any* grieving thorn of all *that are* round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD. Thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God."
 - a. Sidon had been a brier in the flesh of God's people. They opposed the peace and prosperity of Israel, and had a disastrous effect on them by the contaminations of their idolatry. If the Israelites had driven out all of the Canaanites (including the Phoenicians), they would have avoided many hurtful and costly problems in the future.
 - 1) Numbers 33:55: "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them *shall be* pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell."
 - 2) Joshua 23:13: "Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you."
 - 3) Judges 1:31: "Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob."
 - b. "Whilst the heathen nations succumb to the judgments of God, Israel passes on to a time of blessed

peace. The Lord will gather his people from their dispersion among the heathen, bring them into the land which he gave to the patriarch Jacob, his servant, and give them in that land rest, security, and true prosperity” (Keil, Vol. I, p.428).

- c. “The contrast of the future of Israel with that of the surrounding nations. This prophecy reaches far beyond a mere temporal restoration. It points to times of more permanent security, when from all nations and kingdoms the Church of Christ, the Israel of God, shall be gathered in, when the power of the world shall be forever broken, and the kingdom of Christ shall be established forever. This transition from the enemies to the people of God closes the portion of the prophecies against the nations in the immediate vicinity of the Israelites, before passing to the more distant Egypt” [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
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EZEKIEL 29

A. Ezekiel 29:1-16: The Judgment Against Egypt.

1. Verses 1-2: "In the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, in the twelfth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt."
 - a. "The announcement of the judgment upon Egypt is proclaimed in seven 'words of God.' The first five are threats. The first (ch. 29:1-16) contains a threat of the judgment upon Pharaoh and his people and land, expressed in grand and general traits. The second (ch. 29:17-21) gives a special prediction of the conquest and plundering of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. The third (ch. 30:1-19) depicts the day of judgment which will break upon Egypt and its allies. The fourth (ch. 30:20-26) foretells the annihilation of the might of Pharaoh by the king of Babylon; and the fifth (ch. 31) holds up as a warning to the king and the people of Egypt the glory and the overthrow of Assyria. The last two words of God in ch. 32 contain lamentations over the destruction of Pharaoh and his might..." (Keil, Vol. II, p.1).
 - b. Egypt had enjoyed a long and prosperous past, but now was opposed by the great might of the Empire of Babylon. She had opposed God during the time his people were enslaved by the Egyptians, who were determined to maintain control over the Israelites. But with a mighty hand, God was able to bring the Egyptians to their knees, as he caused them to release his people. This pagan nation was now to be addressed in threatening tones, because of its idolatry and many other sins. Its former greatness was no protection against the impending doom God had in store.
 2. Verses 3-7: "Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river *is* mine own, and I have made *it* for myself. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales. And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I *am* the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand."
 - a. "As the crocodile lies quietly in the waters of the Nile, as though he were lord of the river; so did Pharaoh regard himself as the omnipotent lord of Egypt. His words affirm this: 'the river is mine, I have made it for myself'" (Keil, Vol. II, p.4). "Speak, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I *am* against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O great monster who lies in the midst of his rivers, Who has said, My River *is* my own; I have made *it* for myself'" (Ezek. 29:3, NKJ).
 - b. The word translated "dragon" ("great monster" in NKJ) is used of "any large aquatic animal, here the *crocodile*, which on Roman coins is the emblem of Egypt" (JFB, p.313). In graphic figurative language God vows to put a hook through Pharaoh's jaws, drag him from the river, and throw him into the wilderness, along with the fish of the Nile; there they would all be consumed by the birds. "As the fish that clung to the horny scales of the crocodile, the lord of the Nile, when he was caught, shared his fate; so the adherents of Pharaoh lord of Egypt when he was overthrown by Amasis, should share his fate" (JFB, p.314).
 - c. When Zedekiah smarted under the tribute he was obligated to pay the Babylonians, he thought to rid himself of the burden by aligning his nation with Pharaoh and other nations in the area. But Pharaoh proved to be but a flimsy reed, instead of a stout walkingstick. When Judah leaned on this staff, it
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broke and caused them injury. In the figure, the reed pierced their shoulder and injured their loins. "When they took hold of you with the hand, You broke and tore all their shoulders; When they leaned on you, You broke and made all their backs quiver" (29:7, NKJ). "...the tall reed of the Nile, more especially the papyrus, is furnished with hollow, sword-shaped leaves at the lower part of the stalk. When it cracks, the reed-staff pierces the shoulder of the man who has grasped it, and tears it; and if a man lean upon it, it breaks in pieces and causes all the loins to tremble" (Keil, Vol. II, p.7).

- d. "The Israelites expected assistance from them when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem; and they made a feint to help them, but retired when Nebuchadnezzar went against them. Then were the Jews deceived and ultimately ruined" (Clarke, p.502). Jeremiah 37:1ff.
 - e. The Pharaoh on Egypt's throne at the time was Hophra. HOPHRA: Egyptian divine name meaning, "the heart of Re endures." Egyptian pharaoh (589-569 B.C.). At the beginning of his reign he tried to drive the Babylonian army away from its siege of Jerusalem (Jer. 37:5). Apparently at that time Jeremiah mocked the Pharaoh, making a pun on his name, calling him a loud-voiced boaster ("King Bombast, the man who missed his opportunity" Jer. 46:17 REB). Jeremiah warned that the pharaoh would be handed over to his enemies, at the same time warning Jews living in Egypt that salvation history was reversed and they would be destroyed (Jer. 44:26-30). Hophra's death would be a sign to the Jews that Jeremiah's words were true. Hophra eventually lost his power in a revolt by his general Amasis in 569 B.C. Condemnation of Hophra showed Jeremiah's consistency in opposing any opposition to Babylon, whom God had chosen to punish His disobedient people. [Holman PC Bible Dictionary].
3. Verses 8-12: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that *I am* the LORD: because he hath said, The river *is* mine, and I have made *it*. Behold, therefore *I am* against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste *and* desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate, and her cities among the cities *that are* laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries."
 - a. Resorting to graphic language, the Lord promised to bring a sword upon the Egyptians, leaving them desolate and wasted; he would cut off man and beast from their land; he would smite the land from the tower of Syene all the way to the border of Ethiopia; for the space of forty years, the land would be desolate.
 - b. "This devastation shall last for forty years, and so long shall the people of Egypt be scattered among the nations. But after the expiration of that time they shall be gathered together again (ver. 13). The number forty is neither a round number (Hitzig) nor a very long time (Ewald), but is a symbolical term denoting a period appointed by God for punishment and penitence..." (Keil, Vol. II, p.8).
 - c. Jamieson says that the sword brought against Egypt included Nebuchadnezzar's army, as well as "Amasis and the Egyptian revolters who, after Pharaoh-hophra's discomfiture in Cyrene, dethroned and strangled him, having defeated him in a battle fought at Memphis" (JFB, p.314).
 4. Verses 13-16: "Yet thus saith the Lord GOD; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return *into* the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth *their* iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that *I am* the Lord GOD."
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- a. Following the forty year period, God said he would allow the Egyptians to re-occupy their land. They would become an independent nation again. However, their nation would be weak; no longer would it exert great influence over other nations.
- b. Israel would learn by the failure of Hophra to render any aid to them that the Egyptians could not be trusted. In Jeremiah 37, God promised that even though all the Babylonians were killed except a few wounded men, yet they would be able to conquer and destroy Jerusalem; the Egyptians would be of no help to the Israelites. "Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire" (Jer. 37:7-10).

B. Ezekiel 29:17-21: Nebuchadrezzar to Plunder Egypt.

1. Verses 17-19: "And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder *was* peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army."
 - a. This message was given to Ezekiel during the 27th year of Jechoniah's captivity, which had begun in 597 B.C. Eleven years after Jechoniah entered captivity, Jerusalem was taken by the Babylonians (in 586 B.C.). Fifteen years later, this message was delivered (571 B.C.). "The departure from the chronological order occurs here only, among the prophecies as to foreign nations, in order to secure greater unity of subject" (JFB, p.316). "The preceding prophecy was delivered one year before the taking of Jerusalem; this, sixteen years after; and it is supposed to be the last which this prophet wrote" (Clarke, p.503).
 - b. After a 13-year siege, Tyre fell to the Babylonians. For the time and effort expended, no proper wages were given to Nebuchadnezzar for the defeat of Tyre. Therefore, God stated that he had given the nation of Egypt into the Chaldean's hands as a reward.
 2. Verses 20-21: "I have given him the land of Egypt *for* his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD. In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. God explains the reason for giving Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonian king, unbeknownst to himself, had done what God had planned for him to do, in destroying Tyre. He also fulfilled God's will in conquering Jerusalem and Egypt.
 - b. The statement in verse 21 apparently refers to the restoration of Israel to their land, especially to the work of Zerubbabel, who led the first contingent of Jews back from exile. By reflecting on the events of their past history, the Jews of that time could clearly see the hand of Jehovah. They had the records of the prophets to consult, which would be confirmed by the historical record. They could know that Jehovah is God.
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EZEKIEL 30

A. Ezekiel 30:1-12: Judgment on Israel and Her Defenders.

1. Verses 1-5: "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Howl ye, Woe worth the day! For the day *is* near, even the day of the LORD *is* near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword."
 - a. The date of this prophecy is not specified in the text, but since the subject of Egypt is discussed beginning in chapter 29 and extends through chapter 32, it would seem that each of the oracles was delivered during the same timeframe.
 - b. At the time, Egypt was still a powerful nation, but she would be unable to assist Judah in throwing off the yoke of Babylon. God had determined Judah's punishment, for they had gone too far to turn back to the Lord without suffering the awesome penalty of having their nation destroyed and the survivors going into exile.
 - c. But Egypt was not spotless. God had noted their sinful practices and determined to punish them. This chapter continues to discuss the harsh judgments to be brought upon this pagan nation. Ethiopia would be adversely affected by the afflictions Egypt was to suffer, as would Libya [Phut, marg.] and others (Joel 1:13; Isaiah 13:6). Verse five refers to mercenaries who served Egypt, saying they would fall.
 - 1) Isaiah 13:6: "Howl ye; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty."
 - 2) Joel 1:13: "Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God."
2. Verses 6-9: "Thus saith the LORD; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord GOD. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities *that are* wasted. And they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and *when* all her helpers shall be destroyed. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh."
 - a. Those other people and cities who supported Egypt will also fall. There would be no one capable of giving aid to them. The margin (and the NKJ) says that these would fall "from Migdol to Syrene."
 - b. God said he would send messengers in ships to invoke fear in the Ethiopians. "The cataracts interposing between them and Egypt should not save them. Egyptians 'fleeing from before me' in my execution of judgment, as 'messengers' in 'skiffs' ('vessels of bulrushes,' Isa. 18:2) shall go up the Nile, as far as navigable, to announce the advance of the Chaldeans" (JFB, p.318).
3. Verses 10-12: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken *it*."
 - a. God identified the one who would come to bring destruction upon Egypt as being Nebuchadnezzar,

of Babylon. He and his people are described as terrible in the vicious destruction they would wreak upon them.

- b. He further depicts the destruction as drying up the rivers of Egypt, the Nile and its canals by which the land was irrigated and made productive. The greatest single asset Egypt had was the Nile; the nation is referred to as “the gift of the Nile.”

B. Ezekiel 30:13-26: Vengeance on Egypt.

1. Verses 13-19: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause *their* images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No. And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No. And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph *shall have* distresses daily. The young men of Aven and of Pibeseth shall fall by the sword: and these *cities* shall go into captivity. At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.”
 - a. Noph is better known to us as Memphis. It was the capital of Middle Egypt, and was the stronghold of idolatry. “Though no record exists of Nebuchadnezzar ‘destroying’ these, we know from *Herodotus, &c*, that Cambyses took Pelusium, the key of Egypt, by placing before his army dogs, cats. &c, all held sacred in Egypt, so that no Egyptian would use any weapon against them. He slew Apis, the sacred ox, and burned other idols of Egypt” (JFB, p.318). "And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal *it*: and they shall return *even* to the LORD, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them" (Isa. 19:22).
 - b. Regarding the statement that there would be no prince of the land of Egypt, Jamieson says this is “referring to the anarchy that prevailed in the civil wars between Apries and Amasis at the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion. There shall no more be a prince of the land of Egypt, ruling *the whole country*; or, no *independent* prince” (JFB, p.318).
 - c. God would make desolate and burn the great cities of Egypt. “Pathros, Upper Egypt, with ‘No’ or Thebes, its capital (famed for its stupendous buildings, of which grand ruins remain, in antithesis to ‘Zoan’ or Tanis, a chief city in Lower Egypt, within the Delta” (JFB, p.318).
 - d. The Lord states that he would pour out his fury upon Sin, cut off the multitude of No, set fire in Egypt; Sin would have great pain, No would be rent asunder, and Memphis would have distresses daily; further, the young men of Aven and Pibeseth would fall by the sword, there would be those who would be taken into captivity; Tephaphnehes would be darkened; a cloud would cover the land. After these great judgments fell, they would know that God is the Lord.
2. Verses 20-26: “And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *month*, in the seventh *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded *man*. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.”

- a. This prophecy is dated at the eleventh year, the seventh day of the first month. This was the fateful year in which Jerusalem was to fall on the ninth day of the fourth month: "*And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up" (Jer. 39:2).
 - b. Verse 21 refers "to the defeat which Pharaoh-hophra sustained from the Chaldeans, when trying to raise the siege of Jerusalem (Jer. 37:5,7); and previously, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the defeat which Pharaoh-necho sustained from Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish by the Euphrates, and the deprivation of all his conquests from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (2 Ki. 24:7; Jer. 46:2); also to the Egyptian disaster in Cyrene" (JFB, p.319).
 - 1) 2 Kings 24:7: "And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt."
 - 2) Jeremiah 46:2: "Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaohnecho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah."
 - c. God promised to strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put his sword in his hand. God would be with Nebuchadnezzar, but was opposed to Egypt. Using the armed forces of the Chaldeans, God would break both of Pharaoh's arms, causing him to emit the groanings of a mortally wounded man.
 - d. Surviving Egyptians would be scattered among the nations. These events would give the Egyptians good reason to know that God is the Lord.
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EZEKIEL 31

A. Ezekiel 31:1-9: God Compares Pharaoh to the Assyrian King.

1. Verses 1-2: "And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third *month*, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?"
 - a. This prophecy was given to Ezekiel in the eleventh year, on the first day of the third month, about seven weeks after the preceding oracle was delivered, and about five weeks before Jerusalem fell.
 - b. The prophet is directed to ask Pharaoh to compare his greatness with some other great man. This question (if actually addressed directly to the king) called for him to give an assessment of himself.
2. Verses 3-9: "Behold, the Assyrian *was* a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that *were* in the garden of God, envied him."
 - a. Before Pharaoh could give an answer, God provided his assessment of the king, by comparing him with the mighty Assyrian king, most likely the one on the throne when Babylon overthrew his great empire. The implication already indicated is that Pharaoh would not be able to withstand the king of Babylon any more than the king of Assyria had withstood him.
 - b. The king of Assyria considered himself to be as mighty as a great cedar of Lebanon, whose shadow shaded the forest floor beneath its great limbs, and whose top was high among the thick boughs. This tree was watered by rivers. The branches of this tree were so great that the birds made their nests among its branches. Even the cedars of the garden of God could not cover this tree, and none of the trees within that garden was its peer or superior in beauty.
 - c. This figurative description gave a good picture of how the king of Assyria considered himself; the king of Egypt is likened to this great ruler. But that greatness did not make either invincible.

B. Ezekiel 31:10-18: The Pride of Pharaoh would be his Downfall.

1. Verses 10-14: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit."
 - a. Because the Assyrian had lifted himself up in pride, thinking he was as great or greater than any other
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mighty king, God delivered him into the hand of the heathen (Nebuchadnezzar); he would deal with Pharaoh also; Pharaoh was being punished for his wickedness.

- b. Strangers, terrible men from foreign nations, would cut Pharaoh down, as a man cuts down a great tree. The size of the largest tree does not render it impervious to the tools of man; it can be cut down. The Assyrian king was brought down, and the same fate awaited Pharaoh.
 - c. "In the first clause the tree itself is addressed; but in the clauses which follow, it is spoken of in the third person. The direct address in the first clause is to be explained from the vivid manner in which the fact presented itself. The divine sentence in vers. 10 and 11 is not directed against pharaoh, but against the Assyrian, who is depicted as a stately cedar; whilst the address in ver. 10a, and the imperfect (future) in vers. 11a, are both to be accounted for from the fact that the fall of Asshur is related in the form in which it was denounced on the part of Jehovah upon that imperial kingdom" (Keil, Vol. II, p.34).
2. Verses 15-18: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. They also went down into hell with him unto *them that be slain with the sword*; and *they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen*. To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that be slain by the sword*. This *is Pharaoh* and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. What God did in the overthrow of Asshur he was now making known through the prophet, for a warning to Pharaoh and the people of Israel.
 - b. The Assyrian king (and Pharaoh) was brought down and cast into hades, the unseen world of the dead; those who were already in the Hadean realm would rejoice that the mighty king, who had dealt so harshly with others, was now among them.
 - c. Verse eighteen applies the preceding information to Pharaoh. Just as God used the Babylonians to bring down the mighty king of Assyria, so he would use this same instrument in punishing Egypt. He would be brought down into Hades, to be in the place where his victims had preceded him.
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EZEKIEL 32

A. Ezekiel 32:1-16: Lamentation for Pharaoh.

1. Verses 1-2: "And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou *art* as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers."
 - a. At this point in history, the Babylonians had captured and destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and had carried many of the survivors into captivity. It was now the first day of the twelfth month of the twelfth year of Ezekiel's exile.
 - b. In the message he received on this occasion, the prophet was instructed to take up a lamentation for the king of Egypt. Beginning in chapter 29, a series of prophecies were directed against Egypt and its king; here, Pharaoh is again addressed.
 - c. Pharaoh viewed himself as a young lion, in the full strength of youth, preying upon other nations. He is further depicted as a "whale in the seas." This is some large, aquatic animal; in this passage, a reference to a crocodile, as was the case in 29:3. In his strength and viciousness, Pharaoh had dealt harshly with others less powerful than himself.
2. Verses 3-6: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net. Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, *even* to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee."
 - a. However, God had determined to punish Pharaoh. He would use a great company as a net with which to ensnare him. He would be left on the land, in the open field, at the mercy of the birds and beasts. A crocodile away from water is out of his natural element, and is vulnerable.
 - b. "The multitude of thy forces, on which thou pridest thyself, shall only be a great heap of corpses to fill the valleys with up to the sides of the mountains" (JFB, p.323). God would water the land with the blood of Egypt. Many nations would derive benefits from the downfall of the Egyptians.
3. Verses 7-10: "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at *every* moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall."
 - a. The language of verses seven and eight is used elsewhere in reference to the fall of powerful rulers.
 - 1) Isaiah 13:10-11: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."
 - 2) Matthew 24:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."
 - b. This language is a figurative depiction of the fall of Egypt, with the sun having reference to the king

himself. God promises to extinguish this power and influence of Pharaoh by the forces he was to bring against Egypt.

- c. "The thought of vers. 7 and 8 is not exhausted by the paraphrase, 'when thou art extinguished, all light will be extinguished, so far as Egypt is concerned,' accompanied with the remark, that the darkness consequent thereupon is a figurative representation of utterly hopeless circumstances (Schmieder). The thought on which the figure rests is that of the day of the Lord, the day of God's judgment, on which the lights of heaven lose their brightness (cf. Ch. 30:3 and Joel 2:10, etc.). This day bursts upon Egypt with the fall of Pharaoh, and on it the shining stars of heaven are darkened, so that the land of Pharaoh becomes dark. Egypt is a world-power represented by Pharaoh, which collapses with his fall" (Keil, p.45).
 - d. When reports spread into other nations about the downfall of Pharaoh and his Egyptian kingdom, the people of those nations would tremble in terror; if such a disaster could befall mighty Egypt, what could these weaker kingdoms expect! God pictures himself as a mighty warrior in verse ten, brandishing his sword in a threatening manner.
4. Verses 11-16: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them: and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I *am* the LORD. This *is* the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her: they shall lament for her, *even* for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. Although other pagan armies would be used in this punishment of Egypt, it was God's plan and power that directed the assault. He would use the king of Babylon as his instrument, just as he had done in the judgment he brought against Judah. The pomp in which Pharaoh had basked would be destroyed, along with his army.
 - b. The destruction would be so great that there would be no cattle to disturb the waters of the Nile. There would be few men remaining to trouble the waters of that great river. Through these figures of speech God is promising to remove the power of the Egyptians from troubling other nations in the future; they would not have the military strength to do so.
 - c. The rivers would run like oil—smooth and deep. Oil signifies divine blessings.
 - 1) Isaiah 19:22: "And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal *it*: and they shall return *even* to the LORD, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." After the penalty had been imposed, God would bless them as a people. The land would have been made desolate; the nations would lament the disaster that had befallen Egypt. Those involved would know that Jehovah is God.
 - 2) Deuteronomy 32:13: "He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."
 - d. "Oil is used throughout the Scriptures as a figurative representation of the divine blessing, or the power of the divine Spirit....And oil-rivers are not rivers which flow quietly like oil, but rivers which contain oil instead of water (cf. Job 29:6), and are symbolical of the rich blessing of God (cf. Deut. 32:13). The figure is a very appropriate one for Egypt, as the land is indebted to the Nile for all its fertility. Whereas its water had been stirred up and rendered turbid by Pharaoh; after the fall of Pharaoh the Lord will cause the waters of the stream, which pours its blessing upon the land, to purify themselves, and will make its streams flow with oil" (Keil, Vol. 2, pp.48f).
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B. Ezekiel 32:17-32: Funeral Dirge for Egypt.

1. Verses 17-21: “It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, *even* her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. They shall fall in the midst of *them that are* slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.”
 - a. This message was given to Ezekiel two weeks after that of the preceding part of the chapter. “This funeral dirge in imagination accompanies him to the unseen world. Egypt, personified in its political head, is ideally represented as undergoing the change of death to which man is liable. Expressing that Egypt’s supremacy is no more—a thing of the past never to be again” (JFB, p.325).
 - b. When Pharaoh’s kingdom had been destroyed, it would have come to the common end of all kingdoms and nations that forget God.
 - 1) Psalms 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God."
 - 2) Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."
 - 3) Their beauty and strength would not exceed other nations.
 - c. The Lord had made a similar statement about Babylon: "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet *thee* at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations" (Isa. 14:9).
 2. Verses 22-23: “Asshur *is* there and all her company: his graves *are* about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword: Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living.”
 - a. The Lord here brings up the nation of Asshur (Assyria) as an example of a mighty nation of the past, which had wreaked havoc on the nations of their time. Assyria had been destroyed; she had been brought down into the pit (Hades, Sheol).
 - b. The Assyrians had been cut off from “the land of the living.” They were no longer present on earth to afflict those who were weak. This does not imply that those in Hades no longer exist; but they were separated from the earth.
 - c. Their graves were “in the sides of the pit.” Ancient tombs were caves, natural or hand-cut in solid rock; niches were cut into the sides to serve as resting places for the bodies interred there.
 3. Verses 24-25: “There *is* Elam and all her multitude round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves *are* round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of *them that be* slain.”
 - a. Next, the Lord brings up the case of Elam, another ancient nation that had passed from earthly scenes. The memory of the ancient empires and kingdoms that are discussed in this chapter all have a common element in their history: they violated God’s will, and were punished because of it.
 - b. ELAM: A personal name and a place name *1.* Elam was a son of Shem, one of the sons of Noah (Gen. 10:22; 1 Chron. 1:17). He may have given his name to the region known as Elam. *2.* The region of Elam is on the western edge of ancient Persia, modern Iran. The Zagros Mountains lie east and north while the Persian Gulf is to the south and the Tigris River is on the west. The ancient capital of the area is Susa. The region has been inhabited since before 3000 B.C., but only a few of the periods are
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of importance for biblical history. Elam appeared in history when Sargon of Akkad subdued it about 2300 B.C. Soon, though, Elamites reversed the role, sacked Ur, and set up an Elamite king in Eshnunna. The Elamite presence continued in Babylon until the time of Hammurabi about 1700 B.C. After Hammurabi, Kassites invaded Elam. Their rule lasted until about 1200 B.C. The next century was the high point of Elam's power. All of western Iran was theirs. Again the Babylonians brought Elamite power to an end. The Assyrian Ashurbanipal brought an end to the periods of strength and weakness. He swept through the region in a series of campaigns and captured Susa in 641 B.C. He may have moved some Elamites to Samaria at that time (Ezra 4:9). Earlier, Elam had incorporated Anshan, later home of Cyrus the Great, into the kingdom. As Assyria weakened, Elam and Anshan became part of the kingdom of the Medes. Thus, they participated, with the Babylonians, in the defeat of the Assyrian empire. Elam had little subsequent independent history, but it continued to be part of the Medes' and the Persians' empires. In Scripture Elam's importance may have been due to its role as a vassal of the great empires, supplying troops for them. Elam is mentioned in Scripture in narratives and oracles. Abraham fought Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, to secure the return of Lot and others (Gen. 14). Although this king cannot be identified from other records, the events may have occurred during Elam's time of strength prior to Hammurabi. Prophets mentioned Elam in oracles. Isaiah's word of hope included the promise God would recover His people from Elam (Isa. 11:11). In Isaiah 21:2; 22:6 the prophet referred to Elam's military power. He called Elam to attack Babylon in chapter 21. The second mention seems to refer to Elam as part of God's judgment on Judah. Jeremiah 25:25 includes Elam as a kingdom which must drink the cup of God's wrath. Later this same prophet (Jer. 49:34-39), in the days of Zedekiah, pronounced judgment on Elam. No explanation for the judgment is given; but Elam, as a vassal of Babylon, may have participated in the attack on Jerusalem. Still, there is a word of hope in the end (v. 39). Ezekiel pictured Elam in the pit (Sheol) where it experienced shame and punishment for its destructive ways (Ezek. 32:24)... [Holman PC Bible Dictionary, Albert F. Bean).

- c. What had happened to Elam, would be the fate of Pharaoh's Egypt. The ancient past holds many good lessons for modern men and nations. In modern times, the Ottoman Empire, the Empire of Japan, the Third Reich of Hitler, the USSR, and many other oppressive nations, have met the same destiny that those ancient nations encountered. Those who knew the Bible and God's dealings with corrupt nations and societies, knew ahead of time that the USSR would crumble; they could not continue to shake their fist in the face of the Almighty without bringing destruction upon themselves.
4. Verses 26-28: "There *is* Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves *are* round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. And they shall not lie with the mighty *that are* fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though *they were* the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with *them that are* slain with the sword."
 - a. The Lord brings up the cases of Meshech and Tubal, who had been powerful in their days, but were no longer a threat to humanity; they had suffered the penalty God had imposed on Assyria, which he would likewise bring upon Babylon and Egypt.
 - b. Holman's PC Bible Dictionary gives the following about these two nations:
 - 1) MESHECH: Personal name meaning either, "sowing" or "possession." 1. A people of Asia Minor (Gen. 10:2; 1 Chron. 1:5), known for trading in copper vessels (Ezek. 27:13), frequently associated with Tubal (Ezek. 32:26; 38:2-3; 39:1). This Meshech is identical to the Assyrian *Mushki* and the Greek *Moschoi*. At Psalm 120:5 the name appears in the form Mesech (KJV). 2. An otherwise unknown Aramaean tribe (1 Chron. 1:17), perhaps identical with Mash (Gen. 10:23).
 - 2) TUBAL: Son of Jepheth (Gen. 10:2; 1 Chron. 1:5) and ancestor of a people, known for their
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metalworking ability, likely of Cappadocia or Cilicia in Asia Minor (Isa. 66:19; Ezek. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2-3; 39:1).

- c. To bring up these people was to remind the people of that ancient time of the well-known fate of these powerful nations which had been destroyed.
5. Verses 29-30: “There *is* Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by *them that were* slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit. There *be* the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with *them that be* slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit.”
- a. The kings and princes of Edom, Zidon, and others of the northern countries (including Syria), were further examples of what God could do to those who oppose him.
 - b. Each of the nations mentioned was considered powerful and invincible during their heyday; but they were not able to withstand the power God was able to bring against them. In our own time, many of us have viewed mighty nations whose seemingly invincible might was directed against our own nation; Hitler’s Germany and Hirohito’s Japan were unable to overcome us because they had incurred the wrath of God in their barbarous attacks against others. Communist Russia seemed to be invulnerable, but their Godless society crumbled from within.
 - c. The examples of those ancient cases served as an object lesson to Pharaoh; such cases as those of modern times serve as a strong warning to America, which is fast becoming a Godless society. The Lord’s church in our generation has been greatly weakened by false doctrine and materialism, which not only threatens our own future, but will add greatly to the moral and spiritual weakness of our society as well. Although there are a great many Christians in our nation who have not given themselves over to the sins of the time, their number seems to grow smaller with each passing year.
6. Verses 31-32: “Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, *even* Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD. For I have caused my terror in the land of the living; and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that are* slain with the sword, *even* Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.”
- a. Pharaoh would learn that other great nations and kings had fallen before the almighty hand of God, and could take comfort from the knowledge that he was not the only one who was crushed thereby.
 - b. “Pharaoh will see in the nether world all the greater and smaller heathen nations with their rulers; and when he sees them all given up to the judgment of death, he will comfort himself over the fate which has fallen upon himself and his army, as he will perceive that he could not expect any better lot than that of the other rulers of the world” (Keil, Vol. 2, p.60).
 - c. “Every faithful teacher and preacher can emphathize with Ezekiel in looking at rulers who are corrupt beyond description. We should wonder how long Jehovah will continue to tolerate a nation that murders babies by the millions and entrenches sodomites in places of authority by the scores. Ezekiel’s prophecy against Egypt could be used almost verbatim in denunciation against modern nations—and yes, even against the high and mighty religious people who refuse to know God” (Wayne Coats, MSOP, p.272).
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EZEKIEL 33

A. Ezekiel 33:1-22: Ezekiel is a Watchman for a Rebellious People.

1. Verses 1-6: "Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."
 - a. Ezekiel is given the duties again of serving as watchman unto the house of Israel. First, God sets forth the general responsibilities of a watchman. He speaks of bringing a sword against a land, and the consequences if the man selected as watchman does or does not sound the warning.
 - b. If the watchman sees the approaching forces, and blows the trumpet, those who do not take heed to the warning will bear the responsibility for disregarding the warning. If the watchman fails to give the warning, he is to be blamed for his omission.
2. Verses 7-9: "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - a. This passage is virtually identical to chapter 3:17-19. "The repetition of the duty binding upon the prophet, and of the responsibility connected therewith, is introduced, however, in vers. 2-6, by an example taken from life, and made so plain that every one who heard the words must see that Ezekiel was obliged to call the attention of the people to the judgment awaiting them, and to warn them of the threatening danger, and that this obligation rested upon him still....As it is the duty of the appointed watchman of a land to announce to the people the approach of the enemy, and if he fail to do this he is deserving of death; so Ezekiel also, as the watchman of Israel appointed by God, not only is bound to warn the people of the approaching judgment, in order to fulfill his duty, but has already warned them of it, so that whoever has not taken warning has been overtaken by the sword because of his sin. As, then, Ezekiel has only discharged his duty and obligation by so doing, so has he the same duty still further to perform" (Keil, Vol. II, pp.67f).
 - b. "The position of watchman was one of weighty responsibility, requiring constant vigil and unflinching attention. Perched high in a tower upon the city's walls to provide a panoramic view of their surroundings (II Sam. 18:24-25; II Kings 9:17; Hab. 2:1), he was vigilantly to keep his eye fixed upon the distant horizon. Upon the earliest signs of the enemy, such as clouds of dust from the approaching army or the glistening shimmer from their armor, the watchman was to sound the trumpet alarm to alert his fellow citizens of the impending danger (Jer. 4:5; 6:1; Hos. 8:1; Amos 3:6)" (Mike Brandt, MSOP, pp.274f).
 - 1) 2 Samuel 18:24-25: "And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone. And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he *be* alone, *there is* tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near."

- 2) 2 Kings 9:17: "And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, *Is it peace?*"
 - 3) Habakkuk 2:1: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."
 - 4) Jeremiah 4:5: "Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities."
 - 5) Jeremiah 6:1: "O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction."
 - 6) Hosea 8:1: "*Set* the trumpet to thy mouth. *He shall come* as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law."
 - 7) Amos 3:6: "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done *it?*"
- c. Ezekiel was not given the job of watching for the approaching Babylonian invaders; he was not even in Jerusalem; there were others who were assigned that responsibility. Rather, it was Ezekiel's duty to warn the Israelites of sin and error. These were greater danger than that posed by the pagan Chaldeans. If he faithfully warned them of the dangers of sin and religious error, he will have done his job, and would not be held accountable; if he failed to give proper warning, he would be guilty of dereliction of duty and he would be punished.
- d. The duty of gospel preachers today parallels that of Ezekiel. We are not able to predict the future, nor are we able to speak by inspiration; but as we deliver the word of God to aliens and saints, we speak the inspired written word of God. Those who take heed to the warning, will be saved; those who reject or neglect it, do so to their own destruction. And if the gospel preacher, out of fear or favor, or for some other reason, neglects to issue the proper timely warning, he will be responsible for the consequences. However, those who are untaught are still responsible for their own souls.
- e. Elders are given the grave responsibility of caring for the saints of the congregation over which they serve. If they do not fulfill their duties, those under their charge will be lost, and they will be held accountable. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). But again, each individual is responsible for his own soul.
- f. Watchmen in the church (elders, preachers, teachers, faithful saints) bear responsibility for the welfare of those whom they can help. But in the final analysis, each individual must answer for his own sins, or be blessed for his personal obedience.
- 1) Ezekiel 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."
 - 2) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
3. Verses 10-11: "Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, *As I live*, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"
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- a. Verse ten shows the disposition of the exiles who had finally come to see their true condition before God. Earlier, they had met Ezekiel's message with ridicule and scorn (12:22); later, they had tried to deny their guilt, and made an effort to place the blame for their condition on the sins of previous generations (18:2). They had placed their welfare in the hands of false prophets, trusting their lying promises (13:6). But now they were forced to see their condition for what it was. They were now in exile; Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians; there was no earthly power to deliver them from their Chaldean taskmasters. They could not deliver themselves. This is the situation with every alien sinner today, when he comes to realize his lost condition.
 - b. While they were in the wilderness, God had forewarned them of the dilemma they would face if they went astray from doing his will. "And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity" (Lev. 26:39-41).
 - c. Those Israelites could not be helped until they came to see that they were truly in sin, and that God was their only hope; and the only way he would help them was through their believing what he said and doing what he required. We cannot help an alien sinner or an erring saint until the individual comes to see that he is in sin. If he is unwilling to admit his guilt, he cannot be helped. Now that the Israelites in exile finally saw their plight, they could be helped.
 - d. God directed Ezekiel to say to them that he did not desire the death of anyone. He wants them to turn from the wicked ways and do heaven's will. But God will not save them in their sins! He will not save anyone today who will not turn from his sins. He takes no delight in punishing wicked men; he has no desire to cast anyone into Gehenna. But sinful men, who will not turn from their wickedness, force God to do that.
4. Verses 12-14: "Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth. When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; *If* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."
- a. The righteousness a man did in his earlier years will not make up for the wickedness he does later. The wickedness that a man did in his earlier years will not prevail against the righteousness he does later in life. The condition of a man's soul at the time he leaves the earth in death, is the condition he will retain as he stands in the Judgment. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:11-12).
 - b. These Israelites had been guilty of gross actions of sin in the past, but if they would repent now, and turn from those earlier wicked ways, they could be saved. Their latter righteousness would take precedence over their former wickedness.
 - c. If a man trusted in his past righteous deeds, despite his later wickedness, his trust was misplaced. There have been those who thought that since they won awards for outstanding Sunday school attendance when they were young, their eternal salvation was assured, regardless of their lack of
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obedience in their adult years. But the wicked man should not view his case to be without hope; if he is willing to make a change, and obey the will of God, salvation can be obtained.

- d. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
5. Verses 17-20: "Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways."
 - a. The Israelites thought that they were being punished unfairly. Their forebears had lived wickedly, and they did not have to suffer exile. They perceived that God was treating them unjustly.
 - b. They had brought up this objection earlier, in Ezekiel 18:25-30. Here, as there, God showed that each individual is to be judged according to his personal record. God is eminently and perfectly just. The Judge of all the earth will do right (cf. Gen. 18:25).
 - c. They could not expect to receive unconditionally the blessings of heaven because they were the seed of Abraham.
 - 1) Matthew 3:8-9: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."
 - 2) 2 John 1:8: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."
 - d. God will judge each man according to his ways.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - 2) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 6. Verses 21-22: "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *that* one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb."
 - a. According to other passages, the Babylonians captured Jerusalem on the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of Ezekiel and Jechoniah's captivity.
 - 1) Jeremiah 39:2: "*And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up."
 - 2) Jeremiah 52:5-6: "So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land."
 - b. The present passage shows that news came to Ezekiel of the city's downfall on the fifth day of the tenth month of the twelfth year of their captivity. The report was brought by one who had escaped
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from the clutches of the Babylonians, just as it had been foretold in Ezekiel 24:26: "*That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears?*" This person had escaped from Jerusalem, evidently at the time the city fell. About a year and a half later, he made his way to Ezekiel. This long period of time is accounted for by the necessity of his having to travel without being identified and taken by the Babylonians. The experiences he must have had on this journey would likely make a most interesting story.

- c. On the evening before the arrival of the escapee, the Lord opened the prophet's mouth, to enable him to speak once again. "Thus the capture of Jerusalem was known to Ezekiel by revelation, before the messenger came.... The English version might be misunderstood as meaning that Ezekiel's mouth was opened from the evening *until* the escapee came in the morning, and not afterwards, which the context disproves" (JFB, p.329).

B. Ezekiel 33:23-33: Israel Was Still Stubborn and Blind.

1. Verses 23-29: "Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we *are* many; the land is given us for inheritance. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; *As* I live, surely they that *are* in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that *is* in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that *be* in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed."
 - a. "The first word of God, which Ezekiel received after the arrival of the fugitive with the intelligence of the destruction of Jerusalem, was not of a consolatory, but of a rebuking nature, and directed against those who, while boasting in the impenitent state of mind of the promise given to the patriarchs...fancied that they could still remain in possession of the promised land even after the destruction of Jerusalem and of the kingdom of Judah" (Keil, Vol. II, p.72).
 - b. Many of the Jews perished during the long siege of Jerusalem, many were taken into exile by the Babylonians, and many others remained in the land under Gedaliah. "And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. Likewise when all the Jews that *were* in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that *were* in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much" (Jer. 40:9-12). It is to these who remained in Palestine that the present message is addressed.
 - c. God advised Ezekiel that those who remained in the land were still rebellious to God; they found comfort in the fallacious reasoning that God had given the land to Abraham as an inheritance even though he was only one man; they were many, and argued that the land was theirs for possession. God had assisted Abraham in recovering Lot and the others with them, along with their property, which had been taken by invaders (Gen. 14). "Surely God will help us to remain in the land, and recover our lost prosperity."
 - d. The message Ezekiel was to give them pointed out the weaknesses of their argument. They had been guilty of consuming blood, they had worshiped idols, they depended on the sword to obtain their
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purposes, they wrought abomination, and they defiled their neighbor's wife. Despite all of these sinful practices, they thought they still retained title to the land. They had slain Gedaliah (Jer. 41:2), the man the Babylonians had appointed as governor. They were in rebellion, therefore, to both Jehovah and Babylon.

- e. These sinful men would be sought out and destroyed, wherever they were found; they would not find safety in fortified places or in caves. What the sword did not slay, the beasts of the field would devour, and any left over would fall victim to pestilence.
- f. After slaying Gedaliah, the remnant in Judah sought refuge in the land of Egypt, but even there, the hand of God, using Nebuchadnezzar as his tool, found them.
 - 1) Jeremiah 43:7-11: "So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they *even* to Tahpanhes. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln, which *is* at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah; And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, *and deliver such as are* for death to death; and such *as are* for captivity to captivity; and such *as are* for the sword to the sword."
 - 2) Jeremiah 44:11-14: "Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, *and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape....Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs."*
2. Verses 30-33: "Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as my people*, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."
 - a. When the Lord had first called Ezekiel to the prophetic office, he warned him about the heavy obligations of his work (Ezek. 3:17-19). He was warned not to let the opposition of the people turn him from his God-given duty. The prophet is here cautioned against letting either flattery or rejection influence him in discharging his work.
 - b. "As God had directed the prophet's attention, on the occasion of his call, to the difficulties connected with the discharge of the duties of a watchman with which he was entrusted, by setting before him the object and the responsibility of his vocation, and had warned him not to allow himself to be turned aside by the opposition of the people; so here in vers. 30-33, at the commencement of the second section of his ministry, another word is addressed to him personally, in order that he may not be

influenced in the further prosecution of his calling by either the pleasure or displeasure of men” (Keil, Vol. II, pp.76f).

- c. The Lord told him here that they would begin to conspire against him, since they could not refute his word and would not obey what he revealed. The people indicated included some of the present exiles, but the reference seems to be especially to those who were yet in Palestine, who were spoken of in the preceding part of this chapter. Some writers think that the scene has reverted altogether back to Babylonia, where the exiles are the subject of this passage.
 - d. Outwardly, they would be believers, but they were neither sincere nor committed to the truth. They are pictured as conspiring against Ezekiel, whispering behind his back among themselves to his hurt, thinking they could avoid any repercussions from Jehovah. Faithful prophets then and loyal gospel preachers now are often opposed by those who reject the truth; since they cannot refute the truth, they must resort to attacking the proclaimer and his character. All such efforts, although oftentimes successful in the short run, will inevitably fail in the Judgment.
 - 1) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
 - 2) Romans 2:16: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."
 - 3) Romans 14:10-12: "...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*"
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - e. From all discernable indicators, these people were serious in the accolades they heaped upon the prophet. His words were like a beautiful song, or the pleasant sound of an accomplished musician. They heaped praises upon him for the message he spoke, but their hearts were not attuned to obeying the demands made on them by the message. Outwardly, they were appreciative of what he said, but they allowed the truth to have no effect on their hearts and lives. Preachers today find their messages often meet with the approval of their audiences, but there is no change in the way the individuals live.
 - f. “They came to hear the prophet, as they would to hear a hired singer at a banquet, like those of Amos 6:5. The prophet's words passed over them and left no lasting impression. All that they sought was the momentary tickling of the sense. The words receive a special significance from Ps 137:3. The Jewish exiles were famous among their conquerors for the minstrel's art. The nobler singers refused to ‘sing the songs of Zion in a strange land;’ others, it may be, were not so scrupulous. Had the prophet seen his people gather to listen to such a singer? Were they better occupied when they were listening to his message from Jehovah” [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - g. They spoke of their love for him, but their hearts were filled with covetousness. Covetousness (or Mammon, Mt. 6:24) is the direct enemy of God. Their greatest desires were earthly; they only paid lipservice to the heavenly.
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EZEKIEL 34

A. Ezekiel 34:1-10: Israel Had Bad Shepherds.

1. Verses 1-6: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe *be* to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: *but* ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up *that which was* broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because *there is* no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek *after them.*"
 - a. Jehovah decries the evil treatment on the part of those charged with tending to his people. They had fleeced (and did not feed) the flock. They had fed themselves at the expense of the flock. The shepherds of Israel included the priests, elders and princes. They took from the people and lavished it upon themselves.
 - b. He pronounced a curse upon the shepherds. They had offered no strength to the diseased, gave no aid to the sick, gave no succor to the wounded, and did not reclaim those which were driven away or lost. They had ruled by force and cruelty, and were unconcerned over the welfare of the people. They had neglected their obligations to their own eventual hurt.
 - c. Now God's sheep had been scattered by the Babylonian invasion; they had been exiled into foreign lands; and there was no one on earth who sought after their welfare. Those shepherds which were now over the people were unconcerned over their spiritual condition. Compare: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).
 - d. Today, in the Lord's church, elders are appointed to oversee and tend the flock, the local church where they serve. They are to feed, not fleece, the flock. What happens to the flock is their responsibility.
 - 1) Acts 20:28-31: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."
 - 2) 1 Peter 5:1-3: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
 - 4) Sometimes, those charged with caring for the flock have little genuine concern for the flock.
 2. Verses 7-10: "Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely
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because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed them-selves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.”

- a. The shepherds had failed miserably in discharging their obligations to the flock of God. They had enriched themselves to the hurt of their charges. The flock had become victim to the beasts of the field, because the shepherds did not protect and guide them properly. In plain language, they had served their own selfish interests, allowing the flock to become corrupted by idolatry and sin, so that God was obliged to send the Babylonians into the land to apply the required punishment.
- b. Therefore, God would remove these shepherds from their positions; they would no longer be able to enrich themselves at the expense of the people.
- c. “It is true that the people had also made themselves guilty of this sin, so that it was obliged to atone not only for the sins of its shepherds, but for its own sin also; but this is passed by here, in accordance with the design of this prophecy. And it could very properly be kept out of sight, inasmuch as the rulers had also occasioned the idolatry of the people, partly by their neglect of their duty, and partly by their bad example” (Keil, Vol. II, p.84).
- d. Zechariah 11:17: "Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword *shall be* upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened."
- e. Jeremiah 23:1-4: "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD."

B. Ezekiel 34:11-22: God Would be Their True Shepherd.

1. Verses 11-15: “For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep *that are* scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. God announces that he will serve his people as a loving shepherd. He would seek them out in the lands into which they had been scattered, gather them up, and return them to their rightful pastures in Israel, there to partake of the bounties of the land again. The reference is, of course, to their return to Canaan following the seventy years in Babylonian captivity.
 - b. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah provide the details of how God enabled Israel to return to the land of promise.
2. Verses 16-22: “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up *that which was* broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment. And *as for* you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. *Seemeth it* a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures?

and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And *as for* my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, *even* I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.”

- a. In the first half of verse sixteen, God continues his promise to bring Israel back to their land; in this passage, he further promises to bind up their wounds and to strengthen the sick.
- b. In the second part of verse sixteen, he notes that not all of those who would return would be what they ought to be; there would be among the returning nation, some who would take advantage when they could. These would be destroyed by means of appropriate judgments. Before Christ came, the Pharisees and Sadducees had arisen, taking positions of authority, in which they abused the innocent, including Christ. In his own way and according to his own schedule, God fed them with judgment.
- c. Some would take for themselves the best pastures, and trample underfoot the other pastures, from which the unfortunate would be forced to feed. “The allusion, therefore, is to the rich and strong ones of the nation, who oppress the humble and poor, and treat them with severity. The destruction of these oppressors shows that the loving care of the Lord is associated with righteousness—that he feeds the flock...” (Keil, Vol. II, p.88).
- d. The scribes and Pharisees of our Lord’s time took unfair advantage of their positions of authority to defraud the helpless. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matt. 23:14).

C. Ezekiel 34:23-31: Jehovah Will Appoint One Shepherd.

1. Verses 23-27: “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.”
 - a. This concluding part of chapter thirty-four is messianic. God declared that he would establish one over them. This shepherd he describes by the name of *David*. The Old Testament David is not the man meant, but his illustrious descendant, Christ.
 - 1) John 10:14-16: "I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd."
 - 2) 1 Peter 2:25: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."
 - b. The Lord would be their God and “David” would be their shepherd. God would make a covenant of peace with them. This covenant is the New Covenant (the Gospel of peace).
 - 1) Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - 2) Romans 10:15: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

- 3) Hebrews 9:15: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."
 - c. The gospel provides peace for those who are its subjects. That peace includes peace between them and God, and peace between themselves and the rest of mankind, and peace among themselves. It is the earnest desire of every faithful Christian to live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18). Former enemies (such as Jews and Gentiles) are made friends in Christ. All the causes of animosity are removed; mutual love and respect prevail. Hence, the weapons of war are turned into innocent tools (pruning-hooks and plowshares).
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - 2) Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
 - 3) Ephesians 2:13-19: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."
 - d. Verse twenty-six speaks of the gospel age being one in which "there shall be showers of blessings." The yoke of sin will have been broken. The full pardon from all past sin is provided in Christ's kingdom (Col. 1:13-14). In the kingdom of Christ (the church), blessings that far surpass all of those given under the Mosaic Law are provided graciously to every citizen.
 - 1) Acts 13:38-39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."
 - 2) Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
 - 3) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his
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- abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
- 5) 2 Peter 1:3-4: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Where- by are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."
 - 6) Hebrews 10:1-4: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."
- e. God stated that he would make his **hill** a place of blessing. As Isaiah 2:2-4 shows, the word of the Lord was first revealed and proclaimed at Jerusalem (where Mt. Zion was situated); it flowed forth from that place and extended finally throughout the whole world.
- 1) Colossians 1:6: "Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth."
 - 2) Colossians 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."
2. Verses 28-31: "And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make *them* afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God *am* with them, and *that* they, *even* the house of Israel, *are* my people, saith the Lord GOD. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, *are* men, *and* I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD."
- a. There will be no need to fear a heathen nation invading the land and taking the citizens of heaven's kingdom into exile.
 - 1) First, the citizens dwell throughout the world; they can serve their King where they are; their blessings are not limited to a certain physical territory.
 - 2) Second, the greatest enemy (Satan) can conquer our spirits only if we allow it to happen. We are able to resist the devil, and he will flee from us (Jas. 4:7).
 - b. Spiritual Israel (the Lord's church) is richly blessed because Jehovah is our God and we are his people; we are God's flock, and he is our Shepherd.
 - c. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
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EZEKIEL 35

A. Ezekiel 35:1-4: Mount Seir to be Laid Waste.

1. Verses 1-2: "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it."
 - a. SEIR: Place name meaning, "hairy" and thus "thicket" or "small forested region." A mountain range which runs the length of biblical Edom, leading at times to an equation of Edom and Seir. Parts of the range are almost impassable. The highest peak is about 5,600 feet about sea level. The region was home to Esau and his descendants (Gen. 32:3; Josh. 24:4). [Holman PC Bible Dictionary].
 - b. This chapter is a denunciation of Edom, the long-time enemy of Israel. Although they were related to the Israelites, being descendants of Esau, while the Israelites descended from his twin brother Jacob, they were alienated from each other. Obadiah's little book is also directed against the Edomites; also Ezekiel 25:12-14; Isaiah 34:5-6; Jeremiah 49:7-22; Lamentations 4:21-22; Joel 3:19.
2. Verses 3-4: "And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O mount Seir, I *am* against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. "Although Edom is here specified as the object of God's righteous judgment and would (as a land) experience its devastating blow, the context would suggest that Edom's forthcoming judgment is representative of that which shall befall all those who are at enmity with God....Having pictured the manifold blessings awaiting those who would constitute spiritual Israel in the closing portion of chapter 34, it seems fitting that this subsequent chapter would vividly portray the retribution awaiting those of every generation who are enemies of God's chosen people" (Mike Brandt, MSOP, pp.291f).
 - b. God vows to make their land desolate and lay waste to their cities. We are told that the land of Edom is a desolate place today. Compare: "I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever" (Mal. 1:2-4).

B. Ezekiel 35:5-15: Reasons for Edom's Destruction.

1. Verses 5-9: "Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed *the blood of* the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time *that their iniquity had* an end: Therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth. And I will fill his mountains with his slain *men*: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword. I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. The point of emphasis on Edom's sin is their perpetual hatred for Israel. Even before the birth of Jacob and Esau, there was a contention between the twins. As they grew to manhood, the enmity continued. It came to a head after Jacob persuaded Esau to sell him the birthright for a quick meal. When Isaac pronounced the patriarchal blessing upon Jacob, Esau was infuriated, and resolved to kill his brother. "And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob" (Gen. 27:41). After years in Haran, Jacob finally returned, and was reconciled with Esau for a time. But through the years, their descendants maintained the enmity.
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- b. Examples of Edom's hatred for Israel are found in the following passages:
- 1) Numbers 20:14-21: "And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: And when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we *are* in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border: Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink *of* the water of the wells: we will go by the king's *high* way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without *doing* any thing *else*, go through on my feet. And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him."
 - 2) Judges 11:17: "Then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like man-ner they sent unto the king of Moab: but he would not *consent*: and Israel abode in Kadesh."
 - 3) 2 Chronicles 20:10-13: "And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, *I say, how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes *are* upon thee. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children."
 - 4) 2 Chronicles 28:16-17: "At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him. For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives."
 - 5) Obadiah 11-15: "In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou *wast* as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid *hands* on their substance in the day of their calamity; Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. For the day of the LORD *is* near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head."
- c. God stated many centuries after the death of Jacob and Esau: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13). The statement was recorded by Malachi (1:1-5) in 440 B.C. God's "hatred" of Esau consisted in his choosing Jacob to be the lineage through which the Messiah would enter the world. Although Jacob was not the kind of spiritual man at the first that he would one day become, Esau was both a profane man and a fornicator. "Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Heb. 12:16).
- d. The Edomites loved blood, so blood they would have! God would punish them in a way of his own choosing. Their principal city was Petra, a place that seemed invincible and impregnable, but it was overcome.
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- e. “Edom’s desolation will entail a cutting off of those who pass through it and a lasting abandonment of its once populated cities (v.7-9). Edom’s wealth and fame were not to be attributed to her military or agricultural achievements but to her location. Two frequently used caravan routes once passed through this lengthy mountain ridge of the Edomite nation. One of these, earning the reputation of the ‘King’s Highway,’ is mentioned in Numbers 20:17 in connection with Israel’s appeal for Edom to give her passage through their land. A plentiful water supply, natural resting place amidst surrounding vast deserts, and protection from raiders further contributed to the abundance of trade which passed through Edom. Merchants from Phoenicia, Egypt, Greece, India, and possible even China bartered and sold their wares in her market places. The increase of trade among countries brought wealth and prominence to this ancient nation of Edom.... When these prophecies of desolation were issued against Edom, it was a renowned area noted for its prosperity, popularity as a trade center, and unique and elaborate architecture carved within its beautiful sandstone cliffs. Such predictions were likely scoffed at in unbelief by celebrated Edom, whose haughty spirit boasted, ‘Who shall bring me down to the ground?’” (Obad. 3)” (Brandt, MSOP, p.295).
2. Verses 10-15: “Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the LORD was there: Therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee. And thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD, *and that* I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard *them*. Thus saith the Lord GOD; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, *even* all of it: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.”
 - a. Edom had coveted the land that God had given to Israel and had blasphemed God. These were added reasons for the judgment of desolation God planned for the land of Edom.
 - b. The two nations and countries of verse ten are the nations of Israel and Judah, a reference that applied to the time when the people of Israel were divided into two separate kingdoms. However, the Lord was in the land of Israel; he would make sure it was open for his people at the end of the captivity. The Edomites did not have God’s protection, hence they would lose their land.
 - c. God puts them on notice that he has heard their blasphemies which they had uttered against Israel; these evil words were actually against Israel’s God, and he would make them desolate in punishment. When the Babylonians invaded Judah and virtually emptied the land of the Jews, the Edomites thought this made their land easy prey for their expansionist ideas. These plans conflicted with God’s purposes, and any such scheme was destined to end in disaster.
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EZEKIEL 36

A. Ezekiel 36:1-15: Restoration of Israel Depicted as a Restored Land.

1. Verses 1-7: "Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they have made *you* desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and *are* an infamy of the people: Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that *are* round about; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all *their* heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that *are* about you, they shall bear their shame."

 - a. In this passage, God calls on the mountains of Israel to hear his word. This type of speech is called an "apostrophe." "In rhetoric it is a turning away from the real auditory, and addressing an imaginary one. (1) When this audience is from the inanimate world, it is common to call it Personification. Yet there is a clear distinction between ascribing to them powers and volition and knowledge which do not belong to them, and addressing a speech to them. Personification is present, but it is not all; the turning aside from the regular discourse, and speaking to another than the real audience, makes it Apostrophe. [Jer. 47:6,7; 1 Cor. 15:55; Luke 13:34,35]. (2) When the address is to an absent person, it is a pure apostrophe. 2 Samuel 18:33: 'And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' This is an address to the absent son as though he were present, and is the unmixed apostrophe" (D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, p.322).
 - 1) Jeremiah 47:6-7: "O thou sword of the LORD, how long *will it be* ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it."
 - 2) Luke 13:34-35: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until *the time* come when ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:55: "O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?"
 - b. Because Edom had rejoiced at the discomfiture of Israel, and had sought to appropriate Israel's possessions as their own, God would bring judgments against them. They had heaped scorn upon Israel in their day of distress, when the Babylonians came against Jerusalem. The previous chapter revealed God's opposition to the Edomites.
 - c. In the present chapter, calling attention to the Edomites' evil intent toward Israel, God shows that his people will be again exalted. He addresses the remarks to the mountains of Israel, but the vow was being made to God's people. The mountains of Israel are placed in contrast with the mountains of Seir (Edom). *Idumea* is another name for Edom (vs. 5). In verse 4, Jehovah includes the hills, the rivers,

the valleys, the desolate places, and the forsaken cities of Israel in his comments to the mountains. With spite in their hearts, the Edomites endeavored to take over God's land.

- d. But God would reverse the fate of his people Israel, and visit his wrath upon the Edomites. Ezekiel is directed to prophesy concerning the land of Israel. God had brought his wrath against the land of Israel, and had caused it to bear the shame of the heathen; but he now vows to lift up his hand against the heathen, and cause them to bear their shame. As Israel had borne the contempt of the heathen, so the heathen would soon be held in contempt. This is the divine law of retribution. Compare: "Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters" (Ezek. 16:52).
2. Verses 8-15: "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I *am* for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, *even* all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better *unto you* than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, *even* my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them *of men*. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they say unto you, Thou *land* devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord GOD. Neither will I cause *men* to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. Continuing to address the mountains, hills, and countryside of Israel, God speaks of the land being once more productive of its usual fruit, bringing the people back into the land to till and sow crops as before. He will cause the inhabitants to multiply once again, and the old estates would be built up as in the prosperous past. He speaks of the times being even better than they were heretofore.
 - b. Jehovah speaks of his people Israel inhabiting the land once again, and that the land would not be bereft of them again. The land had been described as "eating up the inhabitants thereof" (Num. 13:32). When the Assyrians emptied the land of the ten northern tribes and placed some of their own people in the land, God sent lions among the new population, terrorizing them (2 Kings 17:23-26). It would not be so considered in the time of prosperity the Lord envisioned.
 - c. The reference is to the restoration of the exiled nation to their land, which began when Zerubbabel led the first company back home (cf. Ezra 1-2). "That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof" (Isa. 44:26).
 - d. "Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of children. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because they say unto you, Thou *land* art a devourer of men, and hast been a bereaver of thy nation; therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nation any more, saith the Lord Jehovah; neither will I let thee hear any more the shame of the nations, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the peoples any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nation to stumble any more, saith the Lord Jehovah" (Ezek. 36:12-15, ASV).

B. Ezekiel 36:16-38: God's Actions Vindicated.

1. Verses 16-20: "Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols *wherewith* they had polluted it: And I scattered them

among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These *are* the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land.”

- a. Ezekiel 36:16-20: "Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings: their way before me was as the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. Wherefore I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood which they had poured out upon the land, and because they had defiled it with their idols; and I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they came unto the nations, whither they went, they profaned my holy name; in that men said of them, These are the people of Jehovah, and are gone forth out of his land" (ASV).
 - b. The Lord is pointing out to his people that his actions in punishing them were entirely justified. They had defiled the land by their various sinful practices, including all the abominations of idol-worship. Idolatry, drunkenness, fornication, criminal acts, failure to practice pure religion, and many other such things, were rampant in the nation. They fully deserved the punishment imposed.
 - c. God viewed their conduct as unclean, just as they considered a woman in her monthly cycle as in an unclean condition. Because they had corrupted themselves, and had defiled the land (in a manner of speaking), it was necessary for God to punish them.
 - 1) Leviticus 15:19: "And if a woman have an issue, *and* her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even."
 - 2) Jeremiah 2:7: "And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination."
 - d. The penalty he sent upon them included the devastations caused by the three invasions by the Babylonians, and the 18-month siege, with all of the deprivations and diseases attendant to a siege. Many were slain in the fighting, many starved to death, many died from the pestilence, and many were taken into slavery in Babylonia. "The reason for their removal was their sin, which God's holiness could not let pass unpunished; just as a woman's legal uncleanness was the reason for her being *separated* from the congregation" (JFB, p.341). Scattered through the heathen nations was especially demeaning to the Jews.
 - e. The people of God had profaned the name of God. The heathen knew the status of the Israelites, that they claimed to be the servants of the only true and living God. But when the pagans saw them removed from their native land, and knowing of their religious claims, the name of God was defamed in their sight.
 - 1) "The words, 'these are Jehovah's people, and have come out of his (Jehovah's) land,' could only contain a profanation of the holy name of God, if their coming out was regarded as involuntary, *i.e.* as an exile enforced by the power of the heathen; or, on the other hand, if the Israelites themselves had denied the holiness of the people of God through their behaviour among the heathen. Most of the commentators have decided in favour of the former view....And we must decide in favour of this exposition, not only because of the parallel passages, such as Num. 14:16 and Jer. 33:24, which support this view; but chiefly on account of the verses which follow, according to which the sanctification of the name of God among the nations consists in the fact that God gathers Israel out of its dispersion among the nations, and leads them back into his own land (*vid.* vers. 23 and 24). Consequently the profanation of his name can only have consisted in the fact that Israel was carried away out of its own land, and scattered in the heathen lands" (Keil, Vol. II, p.108).
 - 2) Numbers 14:16: "Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he
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- sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."
- 3) Jeremiah 33:24: "Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them."
 - 4) When the Israelites defiled themselves by their sins, they profaned the name of God whose people they were; and when they were carried away into captivity among the heathen nations, those pagans perceived this to be a demonstration of Jehovah's weakness, not comprehending the fact that their plight was punishment. When God obtained their release from their exile after seventy years had passed, the thoughtful heathen could perceive that this was a manifestation of Jehovah's power.
- f. When Christians defile their souls by indulging in sin or in compromising the truth with sectarian errorists, those who know our past claims will be moved to vilify God, thinking that what we once believed we now repudiate, therefore our former message must not have been the truth, but error. If we encourage or confirm the errorists in their false doctrine, by turning against the truth of God, we join with those false teachers in profaning the name of God.
- 1) 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (ASV).
 - 2) We then become like the ancient Gentiles, "Who changed the **truth of God into a lie**, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1:25).
2. Verses 21-24: "But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land."
- a. God rightly had a very high regard for his holy name. Because of this, he would bring Israel back into the land of promise. The restoration was not due to any goodness on their part, but on the true greatness of the Almighty.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 9:6: "Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people."
 - 2) Isaiah 48:11: "For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it*: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."
 - b. The heathen had seen God's people removed from their land by people who did not believe in the God of Israel. Consequently, their perception of Jehovah was that he was weaker than the gods of the heathen nations which conquered Jerusalem. By causing the heathen nations to release the Jews, God would demonstrate to the world that he is the Lord! The release of a captive people to return to their native land was virtually unknown. Usually, such a people lost their identity by being absorbed by the nation in which they were enslaved. Where are the Philistines, the Amorites, the Edomites, *et al*?
 - c. This passage is misapplied by millennialists to the gathering of Israel back to Palestine at the Lord's return. The facts of the case do not warrant such a conclusion.
 - 1) Notice that Israel would be brought from among the heathen and brought home again, but it would be during a time when they were guilty of idolatry (36:24-25). It is an established fact of history
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that following their exile in Babylon, they did not give themselves over to idols again.

- 2) The passage sets forth the means by which they would be purified from their sins: God would "sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." The reference here is to the Mosaic ceremony of Numbers 19:17-19.
 - 3) Some scholars think that 36:26-28 may have a Messianic application, but the preceding verses clearly refer to Israel's return from Babylon. None of this passage has any reference to some end-of-time event as envisioned by millennialism.
3. Verses 25-32: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel."
- a. When God brought his people back into the land again, he would sprinkle them with clean water, to make them ceremonially clean. This was the application of the water of purification. This *clean* water was produced by taking a red heifer, which had no blemish and which had never borne a yoke, outside the camp; the heifer was there slain.
 - 1) Numbers 19:4-6,9,17-18: "And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times: And *one* shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast *it* into the midst of the burning of the heifer.....And a man *that is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay *them* up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: *it is* a purification for sin.... And for an unclean *person* they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip *it* in the water, and sprinkle *it* upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave."
 - 2) The water of purification was applied to those Israelites who became ceremonially unclean, *e.g.*, by touching a dead body. There is no reference to the action of baptism in this sprinkling. These passages have nothing to do with the action of baptism. The water was a concoction made from running water and the ashes of a burned heifer. This sprinkling has no relationship to the New Testament system; it was strictly a feature of the Mosaic Law.
 - b. In the process of bringing the Israelites back to their own land, God would cause their stony heart to be replaced by a new heart. There is no feeling in a stone, but there is in flesh. They would have a heart that was sensitive. Their harsh experiences, together with the instructions given to them by the prophets, would have the effect of changing their disposition of heart. Those who were willing to return to Canaan would be a different kind of person from those who were taken into exile. They would be willing to heed the teachings of God's Holy Spirit-inspired spokesmen.
 - 1) Each individual is responsible for the condition of his own heart. The Bible does not teach the sectarian error that God sends the Holy Spirit into alien sinners supernaturally to cleanse their hearts.
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- 2) Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life." The individual must decide in what condition his heart operates.
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 6:17-18: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
 - c. God would bless their efforts when they returned to the land; they would have fruitful harvests; he would give them grain to eat, and would prevent famines from descending upon the land again. These promises were, of course, conditional; they must remain faithful or else God would be forced to punish them once more.
 - d. When they returned and began to enjoy the fruits of the land, they would look back to their sinful conduct of the past, and be ashamed. The thoughtful and faithful ones would resolve never again to enter that kind of lifestyle.
 - e. Once more, God affirms that he would do these good things for his people, not primarily for their sakes, but in behalf of his own integrity and greatness. It is essential that God maintain his status in the eyes of men as the supreme being. Otherwise, men will not fear him.
 - 1) Psalms 89:7: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 5:1-2: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."
 - 3) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
4. Verses 33-38: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities *are become* fenced, *and* are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined *places*, *and* plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet *for* this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
- a. After the Jews were slaughtered, dispersed, or exiled, the land that formerly flowed with milk and honey was left desolate. There were few inhabitants. The fields were untilled, the cities uninhabited and the vineyards untended. The whole country was in a state of desolation. We can well imagine the spreading weeds, vermin, and snakes.
 - b. But God would bring the Jews back; they would be able to tend the fields and vineyards; the land would soon become lush and productive again. Whereas it had been desolate, it would be likened to the Garden of Eden.
 - c. When these great changes were effected, the heathen would know that Jehovah was responsible for these improvements. God affirms that he has vowed to do these things, and that he would fulfill his promises.
 - d. It was still possible for the Jews to return to God. He had his eternal plan still in place. Despite the rebellion of the selected people, God would still be able to fulfill his purposes.
 - 1) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the
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preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

- 2) Ephesians 3:4-11: "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 - e. God would increase the people, from the relative handful who returned from exile, into a populous nation again. He would have a holy flock. The natural understanding of this passage is to see it as a description of the prosperous times (materially and spiritually) which would be present when the Jews returned to their homeland following the Babylonian captivity. Some scholars (Clarke is one) think the reference is to the gospel age. But both the immediate and general context of the passage more naturally fits the return of the Jews.
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EZEKIEL 37

A. Ezekiel 37:1-10: The Valley of Dry Bones.

1. Verses 1-3: "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which *was* full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest."
 - a. The events portrayed in the first section of the chapter are in visionary form. The prophet states that he was "in the spirit of the Lord" during the proceedings. This was the situation with John when he was given the great visions of Revelation: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet" (Rev. 1:10).
 - b. In the vision, God placed Ezekiel in the midst of a valley; the valley was full of dry bones. The bones covered the floor of the valley. The prophet describes them as being very dry, signifying that they were utterly devoid of life. They were in a hopeless state. Verse 11 shows that the bones are used in the vision to represent the whole house of Israel, thus their present status was utterly hopeless, as far as human power was concerned. All of the tribes had been captured and exiled by the enemy, and were even now held in hard bondage in foreign lands.
 - c. The prophet is asked whether these bones could ever live again. Ezekiel responds by saying, "Thou knowest." He is aware that if those bones could ever be brought to life once more, it would have to be by the power of the Almighty. Therefore, he stated, "Thou knowest."
2. Verses 4-6: "Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. Ezekiel is now told to speak a message to the bones, announcing God's intention to return flesh to them, and a covering of skin, and place breath within them. They would then know that the Lord is God. Since the bones represented the house of Israel (vs. 11), the resurrection relates to their return to Canaan and being established as an independent nation again.
 - b. The purpose of the vision was to provide hope for the exiled and enslaved Israelites. No power on earth could free them; God's power and providence would be necessary. He had promised that he would return them to the land.
 - 1) Jeremiah 29:10: "For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."
 - 2) Jeremiah 50:4-8: "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten. My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace. All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks."
 - c. The vision depicted God's actions to resurrect Israel as a nation, which would entail their return to occupy their own homeland, in keeping with the promises God had earlier given them.

3. Verses 7-10: "So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."
- a. Ezekiel uttered the prophecy as he was told. As he expressed the prophecy, there was a sudden noise and a shaking, as the bones in the vision came together, in the proper order, to form human skeletons. This must have thrilled the prophet! The bones had been scattered, with those of each individual not being at the same place. Verse 10 shows that those whose bones were in the valley had been slain; their death had not been natural, but violent and painful.
 - b. As he beheld this awesome sight, he saw the sinews and flesh come upon the skeletons, and skin to cover each individual. But at this point, there was no breath of life in them.
 - c. The prophet was directed to speak to the wind, for it to come from all directions and breathe upon these bodies which had been slain, but now had been reformed. "And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). As God put the breath of life into the body of Adam, so he now caused it to enter each of these lifeless bodies.
 - d. The individuals in the vision were given life by God's miraculous power, and they stood upon their feet. They had their full strength returned to them, and their number was exceedingly great. They represented a vast, powerful army. This scene, although visionary, must have had a powerful impact on Ezekiel.
 - e. In reading this story, we are reminded of the great resurrection scheduled for the end of time. All who are in the graves (*i.e.*, all who have died) will hear the call and will rise from the dead. They will be given bodies, which will be changed into immortal, spiritual entities, perfectly adapted to their eternal destiny.
 - 1) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
 - 3) Revelation 20:13: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."
 - 4) 1 Corinthians 15:42-44: "So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 15:51-53: "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality."
 - f. It is difficult for a worldly-minded person to understand how God could resurrect disintegrated bodies. His miraculous power can accomplish anything he wills to do, despite our inability to com-
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prehend the action. He was able to create the bodies occupied by Adam and Eve, demonstrating his awesome power. We do not perceive how God is able to place the germ of life in a grain of corn, enabling that small kernel to produce a large plant, which bears ears which are filled with other kernels identical to the original. God has promised to raise the dead; the fact of the resurrection is therefore a foregone conclusion! The physical body is the only part of our being that dies and needs to be raised (Jas. 2:26).

B. Ezekiel 37:11-14: The Bones Represent the Whole House of Israel.

1. Verses 11-12: "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."
 - a. We are not left in doubt as to the meaning of the vision. We are told plainly here that the bones are the "whole house of Israel." This does not mean, of course, that the bones literally **are** the house of Israel, but that they represent Israel. One who can see this truth, can also see that the bread and fruit of the vine represent the body and blood of Christ, and are not the literal body and blood of the Lord.
 - 1) Christ gave the interpretation of the Parable of the Soils and the Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8). The meaning of these parables is clear, and furnishes the method by which the other parables may be properly deciphered
 - 2) Peter gave the meaning of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit which the apostles received on the Pentecost Day of Acts Two: "But **this is that** which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16).
 - 3) Since the key to the interpretation of our present text is given, there should be no failure to discern correctly the meaning of the passage. God is speaking of the return of Israel from their exile, depicting the transaction as a national resurrection.
 - b. Premillennial proponents interpret this passage, which speaks of the return of Israel to Palestine from their Babylonian captivity, as a literal migration of Jews back into Palestine at the beginning of the "thousand-year reign of Christ" at Jerusalem. The theory is without any Biblical support, and is in fact, a repudiation of clear scriptural evidence. At the time this prophecy was given, Israel was in bondage in Babylon, without any hope of returning to their homeland. There was no more life to their nation than there would be in a valley-full of dry bones (Ezek. 37:11). The passage gives a graphic picture of their national resurrection and restoration to Canaan.
 - 1) Ezekiel 37:12-14: "Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD."
 - 2) The prophecy was fulfilled beginning in 536 B.C. when Cyrus permitted the first contingent of Jews to return home.
 - c. God promises that he will open their "graves," and cause them to come forth from their national lifelessness; he would bring them again into their homeland, and establish them as a nation once more, giving them a fresh start.
 2. Verses 13-14: "And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD."
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- a. The result of their restoration to their land would be the knowledge that God is the Lord. He had predicted the event, and when he fulfilled it, they could know clearly that he truly is the Lord.
- b. As there were three deportation from Palestine, so there would be three separate groups to return:

EVENT	DATE	LEADER
DEPORTATION	606 B.C.	
DEPORTATION	597 B.C.	
DEPORTATION	586 B.C.	
RETURN	536 B.C.	ZERUBBABEL
RETURN	457 B.C.	EZRA
RETURN	444 B.C.	NEHEMIAH

C. Ezekiel 37:15-28: Israel and Judah to be Reunited.

1. Verses 15-19: "The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou *meanest* by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand."

 - a. This passage tells about the prophet being directed to take two sticks, one for Judah and one for Joseph (Ephraim, or the northern kingdom). He was told to join them together so that they would become one stick in his hand. The northern kingdom (Israel) went into Assyrian captivity in 721 B.C., and lost their identity as a nation. The southern kingdom (Judah) began going into Babylonian captivity in 606 B.C.
 - b. In anticipation of the return of a remnant of the whole nation, God gave this picture of hope for Israel. This had reference to the return of 536 B.C., not to a fictitious gathering of all the Jews to Palestine at the Lord's return.
 - c. "The union of the two rods was a prophecy in action of the brotherly union which is to re-unite the ten tribes and Judah. As their severance under Jeroboam was fraught with the greatest evil to the covenant-people, so the first result of both being joined by the spirit of life to God is, they become joined to one another..." (JFB, p.346).
 - 1) Jamieson tries to apply the prophecy to the unity under the Messiah, but the context will not allow it. The very point of the passage is to show the Israelites that the national division of former days would be destroyed when they returned to Palestine. They would no longer be two distinct kingdoms, but one; God would be their only king, just as he had always intended.
 - 2) 1 Samuel 8:4-9: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee,

but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them."

- 3) In verses 24-28, the prophecy reaches forward to the time of the Messiah, but to this point, the reference has application to the return of the Israelites from captivity, and their service to God in keeping with the Mosaic Law (cf. 36:25-38).
 2. Verses 20-23: "And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God."
 - a. The division of the nation following the death of Solomon was occasioned by the foolish policies of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. God endeavored to work with both segments of the Israelite people, but eventually both kingdoms plunged into sin and rebellion so deeply that it was necessary for God to punish them. Now, it was his plan to unite the remnant of both groups into one nation, establishing them as one political and religious entity, in the land of promise.
 - b. God promised to gather the people of Israel from the various places where they had been forced to serve their overlords; he would gather the people of the northern ten tribes and join them with the people of the southern two tribes; they would be brought back home.
 - c. The harsh punishment of war with the heathen invaders, together with the bondage under which they had served their conquerors, would separate them fully from the practice of idolatry. They will have learned their lesson well! Cleansing them, he will bring them back home; they would be his people and he would be their God.
 3. Verses 24-28: "And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."
 - a. It is a frequent feature of Old Testament prophecies that the spokesman will address matters of a local and more immediate fulfillment, and in the same general context, to leap forward to describe events of a far distant time. This is the case in the present text.
 - 1) In the preceding verses, Ezekiel had spoken of God's intention to obtain the release of Israel from captivity and to return them to their native soil. On their return, they would serve God according to his Old Testament Law.
 - 2) With that as the background, the prophet here darts forward in time to the occasion when the Messiah will have come, and describes the conditions that will pertain under his reign.
 - b. Using similar language with which he described Israel's situation on their return to Palestine, God speaks of the relationship the servants of the Messiah will serve their Lord. The Messiah is spoken
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of as *David* in four verses in Ezekiel:

- 1) Ezekiel 34:23-24: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant **David**; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant **David** a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*."
 - 2) Ezekiel 37:24-25: "And **David** my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant **David** *shall be* their prince for ever."
- c. Only one man in Old Testament history was named David. He was, of course, the son of Jesse, who slew Goliath, and became Israel's best-loved king. He wanted to construct a temple for the Lord, but because he was a man of war, he was not given that privilege. His son Solomon was to be given that honor (2 Kings 1-11). However, a prophecy was given to David, showing that another one of his offspring would one day build a house, a more wonderful *temple* than any earthly edifice:
- 1) 2 Samuel 7:12-14: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."
 - 2) Hebrews 1:8: "But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom."
 - 3) Acts 2:29-36: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
 - 4) Luke 1:30-33: "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."
 - a) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - b) Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:"
- d. The people of the time period indicated (the gospel age) would have only one shepherd. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd" (John 10:16). The one fold is the church (kingdom); the one shepherd is Christ; the other sheep are the Gentiles.
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- e. The *covenant of peace* is the gospel, which establishes peace between the followers of the Messiah and God, and between each other and with other men.
 - 1) Ephesians 2:13-17: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."
 - 2) Romans 10:15: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"
 - 3) Romans 12:18: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
 - 4) Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
- f. The covenant of peace would be an *everlasting covenant*.
 - 1) Hebrews 13:20: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the **everlasting covenant**."
 - 2) Revelation 14:6: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the **everlasting gospel** to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

D. There are Some Good Lessons Suggested by the Chapter.

- 1. The Lord's people commonly face overwhelming odds and problems.
 - a. The weight of the enemies is great. We are always in the minority. An apostate preacher once wrote: "If God is not larger than the fellowship with which I commune on a given Lord's Day, he is too small to be worthy of worship." Such a statement ignores the fact that God has an absolute standard which the majority of a given generation rejects. In Noah's generation, only eight people saw fit to accept God's word; the vast majority died in the flood, with the accountable ones also suffering eternal separation from God.
 - b. There is the added problem of sin among some members of the Lord's church.
 - c. There is likewise the common problem of a shortage of money, discouragement, and uncertainty as to the future.
 - d. To offset these problems, God supplies all that we truly need to do the best we can. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). God did for his Old Testament people what they could not do for themselves.
 - 2. The Israelites were an enslaved people, and had no possible way to deliver themselves from their harsh masters. Only God could free them to return to their homeland.
 - a. Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."
 - b. Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Cf. Romans 8:31-39.
 - c. We could give up in despair or deny the reality of our problems. Or we can face the problems, do our part, and rely on God for the rest.
 - 3. The text shows God's power is often exerted through human agency, even during the miraculous age.
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Ezekiel was told to prophesy (to speak out; to preach God's message). When we preach God's word today, great results also happen.

- a. The lost are shown the way to salvation.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:10-11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."
 - 2) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 3) Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
 - 4) 1 Corinthians 1:18,21: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God...For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."
 - b. The word of God is the most powerful force on earth.
 - 1) Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
 - 2) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - 3) James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:24-25: "For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
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EZEKIEL 38

A. Ezekiel 38:1-9: The Forces of Gog are Assembled.

1. Verses 1-6: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of *armour*, even a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: *and* many people with thee."
- a. *Gog* is the name of a certain Reubenite (1 Chron. 5:4). The name appears seven times in Ezekiel 38-39, and once in the New Testament (Rev. 20:8). Regarding Gog and Magog, Holman's PC Bible Dictionary offers this: "In Ezekiel 38-39, Gog of the land of Magog is the leader of the forces of evil in an apocalyptic conflict against Yahweh. In Revelation 20:8, Gog and Magog appear together in parallel construction as forces fighting for Satan after his 1,000 year bondage. The identity of Gog and Magog has been the subject of an extraordinary amount of speculation. In general, however, attempts to relate these figures to modern individuals or states have been unconvincing. Ezekiel's prophecy is apparently built on Jeremiah's sermons against a foe from the north (Jer. 4-6). Ezekiel's historical reference may have been Gyges, king of Lydia, who asked Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, for help in 676 B.C. but then joined an Egyptian-led rebellion against Assyria about 665 B.C. His name became a symbol for the powerful, feared king of the north. Magog is apparently a Hebrew construction meaning, 'place of Gog.'"
 - b. The prophecies of chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine are among the most difficult passages in the Bible. Acknowledging their perplexing nature, we must be cautious about asserting any conclusion, especially if the interpretation clashes with any clearer Biblical truth. Three views of the passage have been advanced:
 - 1) **The historical view:** The prophecy was still in the future during Ezekiel's life, but was to be fulfilled in a time not too far distant to his time. The references in the passage were to a literal invasion of Israel by enemies from the north. A likely candidate was the trouble occasioned by Antiochus Epiphanes. "Funk & Wagnalls gives the following: Antiochus IV, called Epiphanes ('the illustrious') (c. 215-164 bc), king of Syria (175-164 bc), son of Antiochus III. From 171 to 168 bc , he was involved in a war against Egypt, defeating two Egyptian kings, Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VII. He captured Jerusalem, prohibited Judaism, and tried to establish the worship of Greek gods. Under the leadership of the Jewish priest Mattathias (died c. 166 bc) and his sons, the Maccabees, the Jews revolted (167-160 bc) and drove Antiochus from Jerusalem. Later he won victories over the Armenians and Persians" [Compton's Infopedia].
 - 2) **The futuristic view:** This view maintains that the prophecies of the two chapters are still future to our present day, and are to be fulfilled in keeping with the premillennial theory. This is a false interpretation. There is no Biblical proof of the theory; indeed, every facet of the theory is opposed to God's word.
 - 3) **The general view:** This view interprets the passage as describing the general conflict that will continue between good and evil down through the ages, with the righteous being assured of ultimate victory. This is a safe view. It sees the great battle depicted as the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).
 - c. Regarding the interpretation of the passage, Jamieson gives this information: "The objections to a

literal interpretation of the prophecy are—(1) The ideal nature of the name Gog, which is the root of Magog, the only kindred name found in the Scripture or history. (2) The nations congregated are selected from places most distant from Israel and from one another, and therefore, most unlikely to act in concert....(3) The whole spoil of Israel could not have given a handful to a tithe of their number, or maintained the myriads of invaders a single day (ch. 38:12,13). (4) The wood of their invaders' weapons was to serve for fuel to Israel for seven years! And all Israel were to take seven months in burying the dead! Supposing a million of Israelites to bury each two corpses a day, the aggregate buried in the 180 working days of the seven months would be 300 millions of corpses. Then the pestilential vapours from such masses of victims before they were buried! What Israelite could live in such an atmosphere? (5) The scene of the Lord's controversy here is different from that in Isa. 34:6....(6) The gross carnality of the representation of God's dealings with his adversaries is inconsistent with Messianic times; it therefore requires a non-literal interpretation. The final triumph of Messiah's truth over the most distant and barbarous nations is represented as a literal conflict on a gigantic scale, Israel being the battlefield, ending in the complete triumph of Israel's anointed King, the Saviour of the world" (pp.348f).

- d. In the passage, Gog is identified as the king of the land of Magog, leader of Meshech and Tubal. The ASV and NKJ translate "chief" as *Rosh*, naming three places instead of two: "And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him" (38:1-2, ASV).
 - 1) "The expression 'chief prince' is somewhat unusual. The word 'chief' is *rosh*. The natural translation of the phrase would be 'prince of Rosh.' Today we are aware of no land or people called Rosh in Ezekiel's time. Some have decided that the word refers to Russia and then have invested all the ensuing details with allegorical significance applicable only in the twentieth century" (Blackwood, p.229). The interpretation that has Ezekiel speaking of Russia is entirely fanciful and false; it is part of the sensationalism that has spawned vast empires of error.
 - 2) Gog is an enemy of God's people, therefore Ezekiel is to *set his face against* this wicked one. Warning is issued to Gog and his allies that God is against them, and that he will deal with them accordingly.
 - 3) God vows to put hooks into his jaws, and bring Gog (and his henchmen) forth. It appears that they did not want to enter the fray, but were forced into it (Keil, Blackwood, *et al*). Their campaign would end in failure. Hooks were used to control prisoners.
- e. The allies of Gog are said to be Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer (Gen. 10:2-3; 1 Chron. 1:5), Togarmah (Gen. 10:3; 1 Chron. 1:6). These invaders would be from all four directions. "With painful vividness, Ezekiel describes Gog and his forces dragged to the conquest by hooks in the jaws. Prisoners of war sometimes thus were cruelly led off to their doom (19:4, 9; 29:4), but these are soldiers advancing confidently to the attack" (Blackwood, p.229).
2. Verses 7-9: "Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land *that is* brought back from the sword, *and is* gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee."
 - a. "Gog is exhorted to prepare for battle (v.7) that, in their eyes, will be a victory, but in reality will be a great defeat. This is a lengthy battle fought against the people of God who are now dwelling safely in the land of Canaan. If taken literally, this is showing a picture of freedom for the children of Israel. At the time of Ezekiel's writing, they are in Babylonian captivity. This symbolically shows that those who are part of God's family are in freedom and enjoy safety. Gog and his allies will come like a storm (v. 9), suddenly and violently, upon the nation of Israel to destroy them" (John West, MSOP,

p.322).

- b. God enjoins Gog to prepare for the battle. His forces are on the field; the victim is dwelling in peace before him; there is every apparent reason for Gog to feel confident of a full victory. But he is not merely opposed by the innocent victims exposed to his attack; he stands in opposition to the very God of heaven.
- c. The picture given could fit the time following Israel's return from captivity. They had powerful enemies around them, as a study of Nehemiah reveals. Later, Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria placed himself before Israel as a deadly foe. But the picture could also fit the times, under the Messiah, when Christians would be opposed by seemingly invincible enemies, who would be determined to eradicate them completely. In both scenarios, the ultimate triumph of God's people is assured. If the latter is the case, then Ezekiel's prophecy here parallels the book of Revelation.

B. Ezekiel 38:10-16: Gog Attacks Israel.

1. Verses 10-13: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, *that* at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places *that are now* inhabited, and upon the people *that are* gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?"
 - a. Gog's thought processes are revealed in this passage. Earlier, God was pictured as instigating the attack of Israel; here Gog is depicted as plotting the campaign. In the case of Assyria and Babylon, they had the desire to invade Canaan, and God used them to effect the punishment their incursions brought upon rebellious Israel. Gog had the desire to launch the attack indicated; and God would use him for his own purposes, and would insure his ultimate defeat.
 - b. Gog speaks of attacking undefended villages, a people dwelling peacefully and at rest, in a land that previously was empty. His invasion would result in his obtaining great spoils.
 - c. Reference is made to Sheba, Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish. "These mercantile peoples, though not taking an active part against the cause of God, are well pleased to see others do it. Worldliness made them ready to deal in the ill-gotten spoil of the invaders of God's people. Gain is before godliness with them (1 Macc. 3:41), with all the young lions—daring princes and leaders" (JFB, p.350).
 2. Verses 14-16: "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know *it*? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes."
 - a. "Again Ezekiel develops the theme that God works amid what man calls disaster, operating in and through the agency of men who are indifferent or antagonistic to his will....And now he makes explicit the divine purpose in permitting a greedy ruler to attack an inoffensive people, that the nations may know the Lord, when he vindicates his holiness through Gog" (Blackwood, p.231).
 - b. It was important for ancient pagan nations to know about the God of Israel. Rahab had learned of God's dealings with Israel in bringing them out of Egypt into Palestine; therefore, she hid the two spies who came into Jericho: "And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is
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fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. 2:8-11). Similar results were enjoyed by other Israelites during the Old Testament era. In the Christian Age, when unbelievers see the providential hand of God with Christians, they can be moved to aid God's people, or even to be converted.

C. Ezekiel 38:17-23: Gog's Destructions Shows the Greatness of Jehovah.

1. Verses 17-20: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; *Art* thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days *many* years that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, *that* my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy *and* in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel."
 - a. "God is not saying in verse 17 that earlier prophets had prophesied about Gog by name but that the people of God would be victorious over those who would battle against them. Isaiah and Jeremiah both prophesied that God would destroy the heathen nations who sought to destroy Israel" (West, MSOP, p.323).
 - b. The fury of God's wrath will be poured upon Gog and his henchmen. He is easily able to cause great earthquakes and other tremendous effects upon the earth and the universe. By such acts, he can cause the fish, the fowls, the beasts, and mankind to tremble and shake in terror (vs. 21).
 - 1) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 2) Daniel 5:5-6: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 1:23-25: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."
 2. Verses 21-23: "So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that *are* upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that *are* with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
 - a. The earthquake would have a strong effect on the enemies but that is not all in the arsenal he would bring to bear upon them. "God further brings judgment on Gog and his army with pestilence and blood. He made this same proclamation against Sidon (28:23). God stated that he would send overflowing rain and brimstone on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when he destroyed them (Gen. 19:24)" (John West, MSOP, p.324).
 - b. If the reference is to some Old Testament invasion of Israel, the terminology describes the ruin God
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would wreak upon Gog and his allies; they would suffer direct military defeat, with the suffering and humiliation that accompany it. If the reference is to a battle between the righteous people of God, especially during the Christian Age, the enemy will be overcome, despite the fact that they seem to have the upper hand for the moment.

- 1) Communist Russia arrayed itself against God and the Bible; they rejected God and censored the Bible. In 1991, to the surprise of many people, mighty Russia fell victim to its own folly. Their government failed; democracy took over.
- 2) The Roman Catholic Church, the source of great evil during the Dark Ages, persecuted all who would speak up in defense of truth. Using the secular powers of government, which they controlled, they caused many to be tortured to death; countless ones were tormented or executed. But the day came when the pope lost the direct control he had over civil governments. Though he still wields great influence for his selfish purposes, his former control has been taken away.
- 3) Whatever the enemy, regardless of his power, the final result of all such rebellions against God will be destruction. God will have the final word.

D. Further Discussion of Gog.

1. Students of the Bible have discussed and argued for centuries over the identity of "Prince Gog" who was ruler over the lands of Magog, Meshech, and Tubal. The name is used symbolically to represent some specific or figurative enemy of the people of God. The passage must be interpreted symbolically or it will make no logical sense:
 - a. Ezekiel 39:9-10: "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down *any* out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD."
 - b. Ezekiel 39:12-15: "And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury *them*; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers *that* pass through the land, when *any* seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog."
 - c. Even the millennialists recognize this for none of them will insist that Russia will invade Israel using bows and arrows. Their mistake is in insisting that parts of the passage be taken literally and other parts as symbolic.
 2. Gog could be used to represent some Gentile invader of Israel following their return from Babylonian captivity. Rulers who might fit the historic picture would include Alexander the Great, the Scythians (who inhabited the regions north and northeast of the Caspian and Black Seas), and Antiochus IV of Syria. Apocryphal books (cf. 1 Mach. 3:41) tell about Antiochus' outrages against Israel during the period of time between the Old and New Testament.
 3. Gog could be used symbolically to represent some spiritual enemy of Israel or Christianity, without any particular individual being intended. This is the view taken by Blackwood, who views the passage as apocalyptic, the type of literature in which the book of Revelation is given. (pp.226f).
 4. In Ezekiel 37, Israel is prophetically described as being resurrected from their Babylonian grave and brought again into the land of promise. In Ezekiel 38:1-8, the great army of Gog is assembled, preparatory to invading Israel. Gomer, Meshech, and Tubal were sons of Japheth (Gen. 10:1f). Togarmah was a son of Gomer (Gen. 10:3). Ethiopia (called "Cush") and Libya (Phut, according to some) came from
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Ham (Gen. 10:6f). Persia (modern Iran) was located at the north of the Persian Gulf. All of these were in the army of Gog.

5. The attack against peaceful Israel is pictured in Ezekiel 38:10-16. God said to Gog, "I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (vs. 16). In 38:17-23, God smites these evil invaders, and thus was he made "known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord" (vs. 23).
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EZEKIEL 39

A. Ezekiel 39:1-8: Gog is Defeated on the Mountains of Israel.

1. Verses 1-5: "Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that *is* with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and *to* the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. The beginning of this chapter is very much like the first of chapter thirty-eight. God says here that he will turn Gog and his armies back from the attack they would bring upon his people; so great will be the defeat of these invaders that only one-sixth of them would remain alive. They were in the land at God's behest, although Gog and his allies would think that the plan was entirely of their own doing. What God allows to happens can be called what God does. He used these heathen men, through their own lusts, to accomplish his purposes; in the process, he would defeat and destroy the wicked designs by which they operated.
 - b. Using graphic language, God states that he will strike the bow from Gog's left hand and the arrows from his right hand. He would defeat him. The Scythians were experts using the bow. This pagan nation is likely included in the invaders, if the references of these two chapters are to events that affect the Jews prior to the first coming of Christ. If the references are to the more general theme of the struggle between good and evil under the Messiah's reign (33 A.D. to the Second Coming), then a figurative description is being presented of the ultimate victory of good over evil. Note from Holman's PC Bible Dictionary on *the Scythians*: "Nomadic, Indo-European people, speaking an Iranian dialect, who migrated from central Asia into southern Russia between 800 and 600 B.C. They were skilled horsemen who excelled in barbaric attack and plunder. Archaeologists have discovered abundant evidence of Scythian artistry in metalwork. Their forces, in pursuit of the Cimmerians, drove south through or around the Caucasus Mountains to the borders of Assyria. A Scytho-Assyrian alliance was formed about 680-670 B.C. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, a Scythian attack forced the Medes to withdraw from an assault against Nineveh (apparently 626-620 B.C.). Later, the Scythians advanced southward along the Palestinian coast to the Egyptian border (611 B.C.), where they were bought off by the Egyptian Pharaoh. They were eventually driven back northward into southern Russia by the Medes. Scythian power was dominant in the area northwest of the Black Sea until about 350 B.C. Eventually, new invaders, the Sarmatians, having confined them to the Crimean area, destroyed the remaining Scythian remnants after A.D. 100. The Old Testament refers to Scythians as Ashchenaz (Gen. 10:3; Jer. 51:27)...Earlier scholars identified the Scythians as Jeremiah's foe from the north and Zephaniah's threatened invader of Judah, but such theories rest on weak evidence. Colossians 3:11 uses Scythians to represent the most repugnant barbarian and slave, saying they, too, are accepted in Christ, all social and cultural barriers being abolished in His church. [Charles Graham]."
 - c. God promises to slay them, causing their bodies to fall upon the open field. The birds and animals would be summoned to consume their dead bodies.
2. Verses 6-8: "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not *let them* pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this *is* the day whereof I

have spoken.”

- a. God states further that he will send a fire on Magog, and others who live without concern in the isles of the sea. These latter people dwelt in the islands near the sea coast, such as those of Greece. They would be involved in the attack, perhaps using their ships to transport the troops and supplies. There would be no escape for them; the fire that would burn Magog, would reach to their shores as well. The meaning is clear if the references of the prophecy are to ancient literal battles in Old Testament Israel; the significance is still grand and impressive if the prophet is speaking of the struggles of the Lord’s church through the centuries.
- b. God vows to make his holy name known in Israel. The Israelites had profaned God’s name by their sinful conduct, especially in regards to their idolatrous practices (cf. Ex. 20:1-6). “The ‘name’ is God’s essence, not, as we understand the term today, merely the label by which we refer to him. The invader, who defies all principles of morality to attack an innocent people, is profaning God’s ‘name’” (Blackwood, p.231).
- c. God would impress upon both Israel and the pagans the sanctity of his holy name. "And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These *are* the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:20-23).
- d. Verse eight emphasizes the fact that God will keep his promises. They could mark the day he spoke these things, and depend on the fact of its fulfillment. God’s warnings are to be heeded, and his promises may safely be trusted to be fulfilled (Heb. 6:10).

B. Ezekiel 39:9-16: Much Time was Required to Burn the Weapons and to Bury the Dead.

1. Verses 8-10: “And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down *any* out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. “The size of the invading host, hence the extent of the Lord’s victory, may be judged from the fantastic accumulation of weapons left behind, sufficient to supply Israel with fuel for seven years” (Blackwood, p.232).
 - b. It is certain that these chapters do not address some fancied *Russian Invasion of Palestine in the latter part of our present century!* These chapters have been abused by many down through the years, with applications being made to the American Civil War, to World War I, to Germany, etc. Some speculators have also applied the 3 *frogs* of Revelation 16:13 to Tojo, Mussolini, and Hitler!
 - c. Speculators who like to twist this ancient text to have reference to modern warfare in modern nations will have a hard time trying to tell why there were so many wooden weapons. The tremendous number of weapons of wood (bows, arrows, spears, etc.) is staggering. There would be enough so that the Jews would not have to obtain their firewood from any other source for seven years.
 2. Verses 11-16: "And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the *noses* of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call *it* The valley of Hamongog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury *them*; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the
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Lord GOD. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers *that* pass through the land, when *any* seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog. And also the name of the city *shall be* Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land."

- a. God would defeat Gog's mighty army upon the mountains of Israel (39:1-8). Their bodies would be food for the ravenous birds and beasts. The weapons collected from the invaders would furnish Israel enough fuel to last seven years; their bones would fill a valley, and seven months would be required to dispose of them.
- b. These descriptions make it impossible to understand them literally. A fantastic number of corpses would be involved if all of Israel was employed for seven months in their burial. This is obviously a symbolic description of the overthrow of some enemy or enemies of God's people.
- c. "...God will assign a large burying-place for the army of Gog in a valley of Israel, which is to be named in consequence 'the multitude of Gog;' just as a city in the region will also be called *Hamonah* from this event. The Israelites will bury the fallen of Gog there for seven months long, and after the expiration of that time they will have the land explored by men specially appointed for the purpose, and bones that may still have been left unburied will be sought out, and they will have them interred by buriers of the dead, that the land may be thoroughly cleansed (vers. 11-16)" (Keil, Vol. 2, pp.173f).
- d. The stench of decaying bodies would interfere with the traffic passing through the valley. "The publicity of the road would cause many to observe God's judgments, as the stench (as the English translation) or multitude of graves (in accordance with the translation of Henderson, 'it shall stop the passengers'), would arrest the attention of passersby. Their grave would be close to that of their ancient prototypes, Sodom and Gomorrah in the Dead Sea, both alike being signal instances of God's judgments" (JFB, p.353).

C. Ezekiel 39:17-24: The Birds and Beasts to Feast on the Remains.

1. Verses 17-20: "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. The birds and beasts are to come and devour the flesh and drink the blood of the fallen enemy. God would be exalted among the heathen, and Israel would know that God is "the Lord their God from that day and forward" (39:21-22).
 - b. The application may be to fleshly Israel prior to Christ, or to the church (or both). If this was intended to apply to fleshly Israel, the fulfillment was most likely in the assaults of Antiochus IV. If the reference is to the Christian Age, the struggles of the church against its enemies is depicted, with a final victory being assured for God's people.
2. Verses 21-24: "And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD their God from that day and forward. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them."
 - a. "The meaning of the apocalypse is expressed cryptically. The essential words in the explanation are
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‘glory,’ ‘judgment,’ and ‘hand.’ As the ‘nations’ survey the grim results of God’s ‘judgment,’ they will recognize that the ‘hand,’ which can smite with such devastating fury, is the ‘hand’ that can encourage and guide and strengthen. Thus they will learn to see God’s ‘glory’ through his dealings with Israel. Is there, perhaps, a touch of irony in the following sentence? Ezekiel intimates that finally Israel will recognize God is the Lord, but only after he has smashed the invasion. Israel is the agent through whom the ‘nations’ will learn who is the true God. In the end, even the agent of truth will become convinced” (Blackwood, p.233).

- b. “The heathen nations will know that Israel went into captivity because of their sins and iniquities. God allowed them to ‘fall by the sword’ because they had turned their back on God and would not obey him. Since they were unclean and had transgressed God’s law, he hid his face from them, allowing them to go into captivity. God will now bring Israel out of captivity and restore them in Canaan” (West, MSOP, p.328).
- c. “This promise reverts...to the prophet’s own time, to which Ezekiel had already gone back by mentioning the carrying away of Israel in vers. 23 and 24. The restoration of the captives of Jacob commences with the liberation of Israel from the Babylonian exile...” (Keil, Vol. 2, p.178).
- d. “The concluding section [39:23-29] bears little logical connection with the preceding apocalypse. It is rather a summary of Ezekiel’s message to the exiles. The point of view is not that of the far distant future, but that of Babylon where Hebrews are dreaming, hopelessly about the restoration” (Blackwood, p.233).

D. Ezekiel 39:25-29: God’s Actions Have a Purpose.

1. Verses 25-26: “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made *them* afraid.”
 - a. “The clause in the English version is connected with the immediately preceding words, thus: After that they have borne in full the punishment of all their trespasses, whereby they have ungratefully trespassed against me, when they formerly dwelt safely in the land, and none made them afraid. Their peaceful establishment in Canaan, through my gift, will be hereafter remembered by them as heightening the guilt of their trespasses; so that they shall be ashamed of themselves, and I will then bring again (*i.e.*, reverse) their captivity (v.25). But I prefer to translate the whole verse, ‘ Then (when I have brought again their captivity (v.25), they shall bear their shame (*i.e.*, they shall know the enormity of their sin, and shall be ashamed), and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they shall dwell in their land, and none shall make them afraid”’ (JFB, p.355).
 - b. “Ezekiel emphasizes again that the exile was not a failure on God’s part, but a disclosure of his essential nature, righteousness. Again Ezekiel stresses that the punishment demanded by righteousness is not God’s final work; for he will have mercy upon Israel. Again he stresses that this mercy is not earned by Israel’s good works, but that it proceeds from the nature of God himself” (Blackwood, p.233).
 2. Verses 27-29: “When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.”
 - a. "God's disciplinary actions and future blessings, which are promised, are to vindicate his holy name before Israel and the nations, and to usher in the day when he would pour out his spirit upon them" (Jackie Stearsman, *Ezekiel Study Notes*, p.25).
 - b. “God will not hide his face from them anymore but will pour out his spirit upon them. God had
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already promised to pour out his Spirit (Ezek. 36:27; 37:14). Joel made this prediction (Joel 2:28), which was later taken up by Zachariah (Zech. 12:10) and was fulfilled in Acts 2 on Pentecost (Acts 2:16ff)” (West, MSOP, p.329).

EZEKIEL 40

A. Ezekiel 40:1-4: Introduction to the Vision of the Restored Kingdom.

1. Chapters 40-48 of Ezekiel deal with a vision of the restored temple and the reinhabited land; the vision is an outgrowth of the promise given in Ezekiel 37:27: "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "The subject of the closing chapters of Ezekiel is the restitution of the kingdom of God. This is expressed by a vision, in which are displayed not only a rebuilt temple, but also by a reformed priesthood, reorganized services, a restored monarchy; and, as a consequence, the diffusion of fertility and plenty over the whole earth. The return from Babylon was indeed the beginning, introductory to the future kingdom of Christ, first upon earth, finally in heaven. The vision must therefore be viewed as strictly **symbolical**; the symbols employed being the Mosaic ordinances. The ordinances had indeed in themselves a hidden meaning. The Tabernacle in the midst of the tents of the tribes, and afterwards the Temple in the capital of the land of inheritance, was intended to signify the dwelling of Jehovah among his people, the priesthood was to denote the mediation between God and man, the monarchy the sovereignty of God, the people the saints of God, the territory their inheritance. So that the symbols here employed have an essential property, yet they are truly **symbols**, and as such are they to be regarded" (F.C. Cook, ed., *The Bible Commentary with Ezekiel* by G. Currey, VI, p.160; quoted by Stearsman, p.31).
2. Verse 1: "In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither."
 - a. The year was 572 B.C. The captivity of Ezekiel and the king began in 597 B.C., and the city of Jerusalem was smitten in 586 B.C. Twenty-five years from the year of their captivity, and fourteen years from the year the city was destroyed, places the present year at 572 B.C.
 - b. It was during this year, on the anniversary of the events indicated, that the following visions were given to the prophet.
3. Verses 2-4: "In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which *was* as the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither, and, behold, *there was* a man, whose appearance *was* like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show *them* unto thee *art* thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel."
 - a. Ezekiel depicts scenes he saw while "in the spirit," and is not to be understood as describing things that literally occurred. He made a statement to that end, as did the apostle John:
 - 1) Ezekiel 37:1: "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which *was* full of bones."
 - 2) Revelation 1:10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."
 - b. "Another view is the 'Literal Futuristic View.' Such is the Dispensational view, which teaches that the future of Israel will be fulfilled in the Millennium, following the Christian Age. It holds that some day the temple will be rebuilt, and the Old Testament rituals will be restored. Everything will be fulfilled in the glorious, earthly kingdom.... This view ignores the fact that when Christ died upon the cross he removed the old law and its ceremonies and its sacrifices (Rom. 7:1-7; Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15; Heb. 7:18-19; 10:9-10). Also, those who will be heirs of the kingdom are not Jews of national Israel, but true Jews in the New Testament Dispensation (Rom. 2:18-19). The Dispensational doctrine fails to recognize that the church of Jesus Christ is now the temple of God, and that it is real, not merely

a figure of speech (1 Peter 2:5; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:21)” (Roy J. Hearn, MSOP, pp.336f).

- c. “Since the original tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon were held as typical of the church to come (I Cor. 3:16; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; Heb. 9:1-28; I Peter 2:5,9), it is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the temple of Ezekiel’s vision was somehow prophetic of the coming kingdom or church” (Hearn, MSOP, pp.337f).
- d. In keeping with a prophecy given through Isaiah, the Jews who returned from Babylonian bondage erected a temple. “That saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isa. 44:28). Ezra led the people in beginning the construction (Ezra 1:2), but soon the work stopped for many years; later, with the work of Haggai and Zechariah giving the stimulation, the temple was completed (cf. Hag. 1:1-14). Even if a material temple were not erected in ancient time, using the prophecy of Ezekiel as a pattern, the visions of our text were prophetic of the construction of the Lord’s church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2; Eph. 1:20-23; 5:23ff).
- e. “In the visions from God, Ezekiel had mental perceptions impossible for man to originate. He was taken to a very high mountain. Though what he saw resembled the temple hill in Jerusalem, it really represented the ‘mountain of the Lord’s house’ to come in Messianic times (Isa. 2:2-4; Ezek. 20:40; Micah 4:6). The frame of the city was on the south. This is geographically correct, since Ezekiel was in Babylon on the north” (Hearn, MSOP, p.339).
- f. The man he beheld in the vision, though described as “a man,” was doubtless one who was far greater than any man; most likely it was the Son of God (cf. Gen. 18:2). The depiction of this person is used in Revelation 1 to describe Christ: “And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters” (Rev. 1:15). Brass is noted for its brightness and strength, characteristics which are true of Christ.

B. Ezekiel 40:5-49: The Temple is Measured.

1. Verse 5: “And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits *long* by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.”
 - a. The person Ezekiel saw had a line of flax and a measuring reed. The reed was six cubits in length, plus the width of a man’s hand. He measured the outside wall, obtaining the height and width of the building of one reed each. Taking a cubit at its usual length, the wall was nine feet thick and nine feet high. The wall served the purpose of keeping that which was sacred separated from that which is profane. Compare: “And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezek. 44:23). Walls were also designed to protect that which is within.
 - b. “Measurements are evidence of mind. Everything in the material realm has design, which implies a Divine Designer. So it is in the church; everything should be according to God’s specifications. The material measurements are symbolic of the spiritual. The elaborate system of types in the Old Testament could not have been devised by man, such as the lamb that typified Christ in sacrifice; the serpent in the wilderness; the healing power of Christ; Moses as the lawgiver; Aaron as the high priest; the passover; Christ’s sacrifice, etc...” (Hearn, MSOP, p.340).
2. Verses 6-16: “Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, *which was* one reed broad; and the other threshold *of the gate, which was* one reed broad. And *every* little chamber *was* one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers *were* five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within *was* one reed. He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate *was* inward. And the little chambers of the gate eastward *were* three on this side, and three on that side; they three *were* of one

measure: and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits; *and* the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. The space also before the little chambers *was* one cubit *on this side*, and the space *was* one cubit on that side: and the little chambers *were* six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. He measured then the gate from the roof of *one* little chamber to the roof of another: the breadth *was* five and twenty cubits, door against door. He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. And from the face of the gate of the entrance unto the face of the porch of the inner gate *were* fifty cubits. And *there were* narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches: and windows *were* round about inward: and upon *each* post *were* palm trees.”

- a. The east gate was measured (vs. 6). The tabernacle’s one entrance always faced the east; likewise Solomon’s temple. It is to be expected that the entranceway into the visionary temple would first be measured. Stairs led to the threshold of the gate, suggesting the exalted nature of the spiritual building being measured. This spiritual building being the church, its exalted nature is suggested.
 - 1) Hebrews 9:11: "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building."
 - 2) Revelation 4:1: "After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."
 - b. The little chambers of verse seven are the rooms where those who served the temple resided. They were not given great palaces, but small rooms. The spiritual priests (individual Christians) who serve in the spiritual temple are to be content with such “chambers” as they are given; humility is a basic characteristic of the followers of Christ.
 - 1) 1 Peter 2:5,9: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ....But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
 - 2) Luke 18:14: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
 - 3) Romans 12:3: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."
 - 4) Philippians 2:8: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
 - c. “Verses 8-13 may indicate the exactness by which the work and worship of the church would be measured. The One who measured the posts in verse 14 was the One who made them. Those who overcome now will be made pillars in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12). In verse 16 the windows indicated light from heaven, by which the church receives light, that is, divine revelation to give light (1 Cor. 2:9-13). All are drawn by teaching God’s Word (John 6:44-45). The palm trees on the posts indicate the righteous shall flourish in God’s house (Psm. 92:12). They may also indicate the victory of the saints over spiritual enemies. The posts give strength to the temple” (Hearn, MSOP, p.343).
 3. Verses 17-19: “Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, *there were* chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers *were* upon the pavement. And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of the gates *was* the lower pavement. Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward.”
 - a. Again, the chambers served as residences of the priests who were on duty in the temple. But the point
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of emphasis in this passage is the beauty of the pavement lying before and under the rooms.

- b. Jamieson described the pavement as “tenselated mosaic (Esth. 1:6, ‘a pavement of red and blue, and white, and black marble’)” (p.358). “The pavement of the court, possibly the color of burning coals, may indicate that dazzling glories of the world should be kept under foot when we draw near to the Lord. But, if the pavement was so glorious, how much more shall the mansion be (John 14:1-3)” (Hearn, MSOP, p.343).
 - c. “The higher pavement was level with the entrance of the gates, the lower was on either side of the raised pavement thus formed. Whereas Solomon’s temple had an outer court open to alterations and even idolatrous innovations, such as those removed by Josiah (2 Ki. 23:11,12; 2 Chr. 20:5), in this there was to be no room for human corruptions” (JFB, p.358).
4. Verses 20-37: “And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof. And the little chambers thereof *were* three on this side and three on that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And their windows, and their arches, and their palm trees, *were* after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof *were* before them. And the gate of the inner court *was* over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate an hundred cubits. After that he brought me toward the south, and behold a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof and the arches thereof according to these measures. And *there were* windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And *there were* seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof *were* before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof. And *there was* a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south an hundred cubits. And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and *there were* windows in it and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. And the arches round about *were* five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad. And the arches thereof *were* toward the utter court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, *were* according to these measures: and *there were* windows therein and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. And the arches thereof *were* toward the outward court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. And he brought me to the north gate, and measured *it* according to these measures; The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And the posts thereof *were* toward the utter court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps.”
- a. Verses 20-26 speak of the gates into this spiritual temple. Perhaps a message is to be learned from this reference to the care that must be taken regarding those who are allowed into membership of the Lord’s church. We are plainly told that it is the Lord who adds those who are saved to his church (Acts 2:47; cf. Col. 1:13-14). However, weak leaders often allow into local membership such as are not qualified (those who will not repent and turn from adulterous marriages, sinful habits or practices, and who hold erroneous doctrines). “Gates toward the north were for the ones famous for their wealth and wisdom. Gates toward the south were for the poorer and less opulent nations. The new Jerusalem is to have twelve gates in all directions to allow for abundant entrance from all nations. To the gates were seven steps which indicate the growth in knowledge, as shown in II Peter 3:18, and adding one Christian grace to another as we advance (II Peter 1:5-10)” (Hearn, MSOP, p.344).
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- b. Verses 27-37 describe the gates into the inner court. They are of equal size, and have the same engravings. "The faith of all the saints should be the same, for all are brethren; therefore, we should endeavor to keep the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:1-2). The ascent to the inner court was eight steps, indicating the nearer we approach God, the more spiritual we should become, and rise above the world" (Hearn, *ibid.*).
5. Verses 38-43: "And the chambers and the entries thereof *were* by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt offering. And in the porch of the gate *were* two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to lay thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering. And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, *were* two tables; and on the other side, which *was* at the porch of the gate, *were* two tables. Four tables *were* on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew *their sacrifices*. And the four tables *were* of hewn stone for the burnt offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice. And within *were* hooks, an hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables *was* the flesh of the offering."
- a. In this passage, reference is made to the tables for sacrifices, features not used in either the tabernacle or Solomon's temple.
- b. These tables represent the many "tables" for spiritual sacrifices in the Lord's spiritual temple, the church: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:5-9).
- c. The washings of verse thirty-eight indicate the purification necessary before worship is acceptable to the Almighty. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1; cf. 1 John 3:3).
6. Verses 44-47: "And without the inner gate *were* the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which *was* at the side of the north gate; and their prospect *was* toward the south: one at the side of the east gate *having* the prospect toward the north. And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect *is* toward the south, *is* for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. And the chamber whose prospect *is* toward the north *is* for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these *are* the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the LORD to minister unto him. So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar *that was* before the house."
- a. God has made singing a significant part of the worship of Christians in the Lord's church. Here, in the picture being given of the church, places for the singers are noted. Every saint has the honor and pleasant duty to sing praise to God, which at the same time offers instruction and motivation to the one doing the singing, as well as every other one present.
- 1) Psalms 96:1: "O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth."
 - 2) Psalms 98:1: "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory."
 - 3) Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."
 - 4) Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and
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admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

- b. The keepers of this spiritual temple are noted in verses 45-46. They guard the house and the altar. Their duty was to insure that the premises were kept clean, unpolluted, and in good repair. Each member of the Lord's church should be interested in the purity of the church, in all its features and aspects. Zadok was a descendant of Aaron, and served as high priest.
 - c. Verse 47 speaks of another court, not to be confused with the inner court. "This court was 100 cubits square, and had the altar in it, in front of the temple. It was the court of the priests, and hence is connected with those who had charge of the altar and the music" (JFB, p.360). Christ is our altar of sacrifice. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).
7. Verses 48-49: "And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured *each* post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate *was* three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. The length of the porch *was* twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and *he brought me* by the steps whereby they went up to it: and *there were* pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side."
- a. The scene here changes to the porch of the spiritual temple. "The porch suggests that one should not without consideration rush into the presence of God, but gravely and solemnly, passing through the outer court, then the inner, then the porch before entering the house. Between the altar and the porch was a place where the priests used to pray (Joel 2:17)" (Hearn, MSOP, p.345).
 - b. The porch was supported by posts, indicating strength and durability. The church was designed to last through the remainder of time, and then be present in the eternity of heaven.
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EZEKIEL 41

A. Ezekiel 41:1-16: The Temple Described and Measured.

1. Verses 1-11: “Afterward he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, *which was* the breadth of the tabernacle. And the breadth of the door *was* ten cubits: and the sides of the door *were* five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits: and the breadth, twenty cubits. Then went he inward, and measured the post of the door, two cubits; and the door, six cubits; and the breadth of the door, seven cubits. So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits; and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple: and he said unto me, *This is* the most holy *place*. After he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of *every* side chamber, four cubits, round about the house on every side. And the side chambers *were* three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall which *was* of the house for the side chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. And *there was* an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side chambers: for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house *was still* upward, and so increased *from* the lowest *chamber* to the highest by the midst. I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side chambers *were* a full reed of six great cubits. The thickness of the wall, which *was* for the side chamber without, *was* five cubits: and *that which was* left *was* the place of the side chambers that *were* within. And between the chambers *was* the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. And the doors of the side chambers *were* toward *the place that was* left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that *was* left *was* five cubits round about.”
 - a. “We should keep in mind that Ezekiel and other prophets, notably Jeremiah, predicted the destruction of Solomon’s temple; and now, twenty years later, Ezekiel gives a description of the new temple (church) which would be Jehovah’s dwelling-place. (Cf. Ezek. 1:1-3; 40:1.) The measurements of this new temple are given in Ezek., chapters 40-41. Jehovah had abandoned the old temple before it was destroyed, and it was necessary that the new temple be built before he could dwell in it. But the temple, in order to be well-pleasing to God, would have to be built according to his specifications; and that apparently was what was signified by the measurements of the temple....The actual measurements of the temple which are given by Ezekiel were probably those of the temple built by Solomon, and the prophet’s message regarding it would no doubt serve as a motive of hope to the people of Israel, in being delivered from captivity, seeing their temple rebuilt, and again being permitted to worship Jehovah in the land of their fathers. The Jews indeed were restored to their former home, the temple was rebuilt, and they were allowed to renew their worship; but it will have to be admitted that the later prophets spent much of their time in picturing that which would happen when the spiritual temple would be erected, and the worship in keeping with the mission of the Messiah would be inaugurated. (Cf. The last six chapters of Zechariah and the Book of Malachi.)” (ALC, 1964, p.238).
 - 1) Ezekiel 1:1-3: "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him."
 - 2) Ezekiel 40:1: "In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither."

- b. “As in the measurement of the outer porch he had pointed to Solomon’s *temple*, so here, in the edifice itself, he points to the old *tabernacle*, which, being eight boards in breadth (each one and a half cubit broad), would make in all twelve cubits, as here. *Internally* it was only ten cubits” (JFB, p.361).
 - c. God’s plans to send his Son into the world to die as a sacrifice for sin and to establish his kingdom remained unknown to mankind until the proper time (Eph. 3:1-11; Rom. 16:25-26; Acts 2:7; Gal. 4:4). After Christ brought the plan to fruition and the Holy Spirit revealed and confirmed the details of the plan, we are privileged to understand what was in the Father’s mind (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-13). All that we need to know has been revealed in the New Testament, but our comprehension of that information is progressive—the longer we study and serve, the better we understand. The picture being drawn by Ezekiel seems dim and difficult to grasp, since it was given in symbolic form in the figure of the temple, but its fulfillment is found in the spiritual kingdom of Christ and in its eternal realization in heaven.
2. Verses 12-15: “Now the building that *was* before the separate place at the end toward the west *was* seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building *was* five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. So he measured the house, an hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long; Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an hundred cubits. And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which *was* behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, an hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court.”
 - a. “Beginning with verse 12 is mention of a building before the separate place, that is, before the temple. It stood in the court by itself. The use of this building is not revealed but may signify setting up a church among the Gentiles, not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of another nature to supercede it” (Hearn, MSOP, p.345).
 - b. This separate structure to the west (verse 12) may have corresponded to the court where horses had defiled Solomon’s temple at an earlier time (Blackwood, p.243). "And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which *was* in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire" (2 Kings 23:11). The significance of this structure in the Lord’s Kingdom is not obvious. It is another feature given in the overall symbolic depiction of the arrangement under Christ.
 - c. Ezekiel’s immediate purpose in providing the detailed description of the temple was to give hope to the captives. They would most likely think that the prophet is predicting the erection of another temple at Jerusalem, but he has much more in mind. When the captives were permitted to return to Palestine, they indeed constructed another temple, which was later renovated by Herod; but the prophet has a far greater and much grander temple in mind, one that was entirely spiritual and eternal in nature.

B. Ezekiel 41:16-26: The Interior Decorations Measured and Described.

1. Verses 16-21: “The door posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows *were* covered; To that above the door, even unto the inner house, and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, by measure. And *it was* made with cherubims and palm trees, so that a palm tree *was* between a cherub and a cherub; and *every* cherub had two faces; So that the face of a man *was* toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side: *it was* made through all the house round about. From the ground unto above the door *were* cherubims and palm trees made, and *on* the wall of the temple. The posts of the temple *were* squared, and the face of the sanctuary; the appearance *of the one* as the appearance *of the other.*”
 - a. “It is painfully difficult to picture the interior of the Temple, because the text describing it is so utterly baffling....[T]he interior of the entire Temple was paneled with wood and dimly lighted with windows

that must have been above the height of the three-story chambers, and even these windows were covered with curtains or shutters. Contrasting sharply with the colorful, sometimes grotesque, ornamentation of the pagan temples, is the subdued, repetitive motif of the palm tree and the cherub” (Blackwood, pp.243f).

- b. "And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without" (1 Kings 6:29). As Solomon’s temple had figures of palm trees, open flowers, and cherubims on its walls, so the temple Ezekiel describes has walls which were similarly decorated. “Perhaps these represented angels who have more wisdom than man, and the courage of lions, thus have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph set before them, and they are sure in their conflict with the power of darkness” (Hearn, MSOP, pp.345f).
2. Verses 22-26: “The altar of wood *was* three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, *were* of wood: and he said unto me, This *is* the table that *is* before the LORD. And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. And the doors had two leaves *apiece*, two turning leaves; two *leaves* for the one door, and two leaves for the other *door*. And *there were* made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm trees, like as *were* made upon the walls; and *there were* thick planks upon the face of the porch without. And *there were* narrow windows and palm trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and *upon* the side chambers of the house, and thick planks.”
 - a. “In Solomon’s temple the door of the Most Holy place was narrower than that of the temple, but in the vision it was fully as wide. In the gospel temple the way was wide and made more manifest (Heb. 9:8); therefore, the door was wider. The altar of wood was not overlaid with gold. This may suggest that offerings in the church would be spiritual, else fire would burn this altar. This is the table that is before the Lord. The altar is turned into a table, that Christians may feast at the Lord’s table (I Cor. 10:21; Ezek. 41:21-24)” (ibid, p.346).
 - b. “The double doors complete the symbolism. Every detail of the architecture has suggested that God is exalted and unapproachable. While measurements are not given for the doors, they must have been massive to harmonize with the structure round about. A door can serve to let a person in as well as to keep him out...The doors symbolize that, although God is unapproachable, by His grace man can approach Him” (Blackwood, pp.244f).
 - c. Solomon’s temple was elaborate, richly appointed with gold and silver; the quality of workmanship was impeccable. It has been argued that since the Old Testament temple was of such a magnificence, that that gives the church today authority to construct expensive and elaborate buildings. However, the parallel between the Old Testament temple and the New Testament church is not in the beauty and extravagance of the meeting house, but in the spiritual qualities of the membership. "But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4).
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EZEKIEL 42

A. Ezekiel 42:1-14: The Chamber of the Priests.

1. Verses 1-7: “Then he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the chamber that *was* over against the separate place, and which *was* before the building toward the north. Before the length of an hundred cubits *was* the north door, and the breadth *was* fifty cubits. Over against the twenty *cubits* which *were* for the inner court, and over against the pavement which *was* for the utter court, *was* gallery against gallery in three *stories*. And before the chambers *was* a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north. Now the upper chambers *were* shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. For they *were* in three *stories*, but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore *the building* was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground. And the wall that *was* without over against the chambers, toward the utter court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof *was* fifty cubits.”
 - a. The *utter* court (KJV) is *outer* court (ASV). “He had before spoken of chambers for the officiating priests on the north and south gates of the inner court (ch. 40:44-46). He now returns to take a more exact view of them....The building became *narrower* as it rose in height. The chambers were many...” (JFB, p.364).
 - b. The chambers served as places where the priests were to conduct holy business. Anna the prophetess must have abode in such a chamber, for we are told that she "...departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37).
 - c. Christians are expected to maintain a practice of private devotion. It is most difficult for us to turn our minds instantly from discussing such things as the latest sports results to worshipping God. For our public worship to be as devout and meaningful as it can be, we must prepare our minds beforehand. Private prayers, Bible reading, and meditation help in this regards.
 - d. There were many of these rooms in the spiritual temple being depicted. The Lord’s church has no limitation on the number of members it can accomodate, just as Heaven has “many mansions” (John 14:2).
 2. Verses 8-14: “For the length of the chambers that *were* in the utter court *was* fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple *were* an hundred cubits. And from under these chambers *was* the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter court. The chambers *were* in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. And the way before them *was* like the appearance of the chambers which *were* toward the north, as long as they, *and* as broad as they: and all their goings out *were* both according to their fashions, and according to their doors. And according to the doors of the chambers that *were* toward the south *was* a door in the head of the way, *even* the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them. Then said he unto me, The north chambers *and* the south chambers, which *are* before the separate place, they *be* holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place *is* holy. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy *place* into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they *are* holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to *those things* which *are* for the people.”
 - a. “The one hundred-cubit buildings comprised ‘holy chambers’ where the priests were to eat the ‘most holy offering.’ (See 44:29; Leviticus 2:3,10; 7:9-10.) Other types of offerings might be taken home for the priest to share with his family (Leviticus 10:14), but the most holy things were to be consumed only by consecrated persons in a consecrated place. In the fifty-cubit structures the priests were to
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change from their street clothing into their sacrificial vestments. And upon leaving The Temple area, they were required to put away their holy garments before returning to the mundane affairs of life” (Blackwood, pp.245f).

- 1) Leviticus 2:3,10: "And the remnant of the meat offering *shall be* Aaron's and his sons': *it is* a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire....And that which is left of the meat offering *shall be* Aaron's and his sons': *it is* a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire."
- 2) Leviticus 7:9-10: "And all the meat offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the fryingpan, and in the pan, shall be the priest's that offereth it. And every meat offering, mingled with oil, and dry, shall all the sons of Aaron have, one *as much* as another."
- 3) Leviticus 10:14: "And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for *they be* thy due, and thy sons' due, *which* are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel."

- b. “They were to lay their garments aside after ministering, to indicate their use should continue only in that Old Testament dispensation. They were to put on common clothing when doing service for the people, to teach them the law and answer questions” (Hearn, MSOP, p.347).

B. Ezekiel 42:15-20: The Temple Area Measured.

1. Verses 15-18: “Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east, and measured it round about. He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed.”
 - a. More measurements are given in verses 15-20, this time of the area outside the temple. Each side was five hundred reeds (about four miles).
 - b. “The large area around the temple may indicate the extent the New Testament church would spread (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Space must be made for the influx of Gentiles prophesied in Isaiah 49:6,8, 18; 60:3-4. Such has been fulfilled, when the Gentiles were brought in through Peter’s preaching (Acts 10 and 11), and when Paul and others turned to the Gentiles when rejected by the Jews (Acts 186)” (Hearn, MSOP, p.347).
 - 1) Isaiah 49:6,8,18: "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth....Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages....Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, *and* come to thee. *As* I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them *on thee*, as a bride *doeth*."
 - 2) Isaiah 60:3-4: "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side."
 - 3) Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
 - 4) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 5) Acts 13:44-47: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those

things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

- 6) Acts 18:6: "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."
 2. Verses 19-20: "He turned about to the west side, *and* measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred *reeds* long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place."
 - a. "Another reason for so large a space may have been to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane, or worldly place. So the church should be now. A difference is to be between common things and sacred, between God's name and all others, between His and other institutions, between His law and human laws and doctrines, and between religious and worldly activities, as we attempt to worship God acceptably" (Hearn, MSOP, pp.347f).
 - b. Israel had a continuing problem of failing to distinguish between the holy and the worldly. "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them" (Ezek. 22:26).
 - c. To profane the holy things of God, by violating his law, profanes the Almighty. To reject God's law is to reject him who gave the law; to despise his law is to despise him; to bring God's law down and twist it to worldly purposes, is to profane God himself. "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife" (2 Sam. 12:9-10).
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EZEKIEL 43

A. Ezekiel 43:1-12: The Glory of the Lord Enters the New Temple.

1. Verses 1-5: "Afterward he brought me to the gate, *even* the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice *was* like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And *it was* according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, *even* according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions *were* like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house."
 - a. After the tabernacle had been completed, God's glory filled that temporary house: "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:33-35).
 - b. Similarly, when Solomon's temple was completed, the glory of the Lord filled that glorious edifice: "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that *then* the house was filled with a cloud, *even* the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (2 Chron. 5:13-14).
 - c. The symbolic temple was now ready for its Resident to occupy it. Everything is now prepared for his entrance. In the vision, Ezekiel was positioned at the gate, which faced to the east. It was toward this direction the glory of God had, earlier in the book, departed from Solomon's temple, preparatory to its destruction by the Babylonians.
 - d. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwell in the glorious church of Christ today. As the literal presence of deity was not in either the tabernacle or the temple, so the presence of deity in the Lord's church is also representative. "And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord....That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:9-11,17).
 - e. The man that stood by Ezekiel (vs. 5) is likely the individual who had measured the building: "Then went he inward, and measured..." (41:3).
 2. Verses 6-12: "And I heard *him* speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, *neither* they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the
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fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write *it* in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This *is* the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about *shall be* most holy. Behold, this *is* the law of the house.”

- a. Jehovah begins to speak from the temple to Ezekiel. He critiques the evil practices of the Israelites and their kings. They had defiled his holy name and brought reproach upon the holy system he had delivered to them through Moses. They had perverted God’s way with their many unauthorized additions and alterations. This he could not condone.
- b. They had set up their threshold by his thresholds, and their post by his posts. They had constructed altars and begun religious activities which rivaled those of God’s design. On the surface it appeared that they were devoutly serving God, but they were actually in competition with God and in rebellion to him. They had so-contaminated God’s house that he could no longer reside there. Therefore, he had brought the Babylonians upon them in punishment.
- c. No one can reject God’s will on any matter and still retain his goodwill. The warnings in the Bible against perverting God’s word are not placed there to occupy space! The many examples of rebellion in the Old Testament are preserved for our admonition (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11; Heb. 3:12-13). God will not accept the prayers or other worship efforts of one who will not follow God’s pattern.
 - 1) Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*:"
 - 2) Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination."
 - 3) Mark 7:7-9: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."
 - 4) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
 - 5) Luke 16:10: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."
 - 6) James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
 - 7) 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."
- d. “Whereas the tabernacle and temple provided a place for God to dwell *among* the people, now the church shall have the privilege of closeness to God, for He will not merely dwell *among* His people, but *in* them (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20; II Cor. 6:16). The church is glory-filled also (John 7:39; Acts 2:1-4). The covenant is where the presence of God is. As was the case in the temple and tabernacle, there are conditions of indwelling in the church. There are (1) laws of attendance (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; Heb. 10:25-29), (2) laws of sacrifice (Rom. 12:1; I Peter 2:5; Heb. 13:16), (3) laws of purity (II Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; I Tim. 2:8). The Lord promises to meet the church there (Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:29-30)” (Hearn, MSOP, p.350).
- e. The spiritual activities to be followed in the symbolic temple depicted in the present section of the book are to be according to the pattern presented.

B. Ezekiel 43:13-27: The Altar Described and Dedicated.

1. Verses 13-17: “And these *are* the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit *is* a cubit and an hand
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breadth; even the bottom *shall be* a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about *shall be* a span: and this *shall be* the higher place of the altar. And from the bottom *upon* the ground *even* to the lower settle *shall be* two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle *even* to the greater settle *shall be* four cubits, and the breadth *one* cubit. So the altar *shall be* four cubits; and from the altar and upward *shall be* four horns. And the altar *shall be* twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof. And the settle *shall be* fourteen cubits long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it *shall be* half a cubit; and the bottom thereof *shall be* a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east.”

- a. “It is the same cubit by which all the previous measurements were made, and was a hand breadth or four inches longer than the Babylonian cubit” (Clarke, p.541).
- b. Concerning the literal altar God intended for the Israelites to use, the following comments are given from the author’s notes on Exodus 20:25-26: "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."
 - 1) The altar raised the sacrifice slightly above the earth, toward God. The description given concerning the construction of the altar indicates that it was to be simple and unadorned.
 - 2) God stated that if they used stones they were not to use tools to chisel them; rather stones as they were found were to be used. He said that to use hewn stones would be to defile the altar. Again, the point is that the worship was to be kept simple; there was to be no elaborate edifice constructed. The Lord desired their hearts to be in the sacrifice they offered.
 - a) "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deut. 5:29).
 - b) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" (Deut. 6:6-6).
 - 3) The altar was not to represent God or some earthly creature, but was intended to be the place where man's worship was to be offered to the Almighty. He had the right to name the place, the composition of the altar, the items of worship, and any other item or particular relating to the worship. He is the one to whom the adoration is directed; what pleases man is of no importance in worship, but what pleases God! "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). There is such a thing as vain (empty, void, useless) worship (Matt. 15:7-9). There is such a thing as ignorant worship (Acts 17:23). There is such a thing as *will* worship (Col. 2:23); this is worship which is according to man's will, and not according to God's will. Doing what God said, in the manner God directs, and for the purpose he intended, is what avails (Matt. 7:21-27; Jer. 10:23; Isa. 55:8-9; Prov. 16:25; Heb. 5:8-9; 2 John 9; Gal. 1:6-12; 5:6).
 - 4) They were forbidden to make steps leading up to the top of the altar. From the time of the Tower of Babel, men have thought there was something special about having exalted places for worship. These were places which only exalted the ego of men, and did nothing to the glory of God. Throughout the Old Testament, mention is made of the "high places" constructed for the worship of idols. These were often overthrown by the men of God, and consistently spoken against (Jer. 7:31; 17:3; 19:5; 32:35; 48:35; 2 Kings 18:1-4). In early America, some pulpits were exalted high above the audience, suggesting the superiority of the speaker.
 - 5) The nakedness referred to has to do with the shame of sin. The sin of Adam and Eve led them to see their nakedness with shame (Gen. 3:7). When one gets involved in sin, his guilt is exposed for God to see. "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure

your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23; cf. Heb. 4:13).

2. Verses 18-27: "And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; These *are* the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put *it* on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary. And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse *it* with the bullock. When thou hast made an end of cleansing *it*, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up *for* a burnt offering unto the LORD. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat *for* a sin offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. And when these days are expired, it shall be, *that* upon the eighth day, and *so* forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. "Under Mosaic mandates the priestly descendants of Aaron (first high priest) ministered at the altar in behalf of the people. Zadok is mentioned. He was a lineal descendant of Aaron. He was priest during the time of David and in the early administration of Solomon. Zadok was placed in the room of the deposed Abiathar (I Kings 2:26-27,35). Specified animals to be offered and the stated days when they are to be sacrificed are precisely prescribed. One cannot help but be deeply impressed that sinful men must have blood sacrifices offered in their stead. Yet as pertaining to actual pardon accruing, animal blood was impotent. Hebrews 10:4 so states. The blood of Christ avails in efficacy for sins to be remitted (Eph. 2:13-16; Col. 1:14; I Peter 1:18-19). This is the potent **why** that it is so blasphemous for premillennial people to turn their backs on the blood of Christ and envision a future temple on Moriah in Jerusalem wherein animal blood will again be offered. Such is the height of absurdity but precisely what we have come to expect from these inept handlers of Sacred Scripture. Such presumptuous propaganda trods underfoot the Son of God, counts as an unholy thing the sanctifying blood of God's holy child Jesus, and does despite to the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29)" (Robert Taylor, MSOP, p.357).
 - b. Although many specific details are provided regarding the design of the symbolic temple, its features and the worship activities, we are not to understand that the Lord is speaking of a literal arrangement. Premillennial theories assert that the temple will be reconstructed at the return of the Christ; in fact, some of them claim that more than one temple is to be erected. A study of the truth on this matter is included at the end of chapter 48.
 - c. "It has been clearly revealed that God's temple is now the church purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28) and that Christians are priests in the spiritual temple (I Peter 2:5)" (Hearn, MSOP, p.351).
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EZEKIEL 44

A. Ezekiel 44:1-16: The Prince and Priest.

1. Verses 1-8: "Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it *was* shut. Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. *It is* for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and shall go out by the way of the same. Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face. And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. And thou shalt say to the rebellious, *even* to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, In that ye have brought *into my sanctuary* strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, *even* my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves."
 - a. Manifestly, the Messianic Kingdom is the object of the symbolism of Ezekiel 40-48. The gate toward the east in the depiction is not open to humanity; it is the Lord's own entrance. The *prince* is likely a reference to Christ, who would establish his kingdom (the church) at the appointed time.
 - b. After being shown the east gate, the prophet is next taken to the north gate. He beholds the glory of the Lord which has filled the temple. The prophet is so greatly impressed with this awesome demonstration that he fell upon his face.
 - c. "He is told plainly and pointedly of the defilements that ungodly elements have brought into this holy sanctuary. Brought in were strangers and those uncircumcised both in heart and flesh. Such added up to a breaking of the covenant and a flagrant failure to keep their charge" (Taylor, MSOP, p.358). Many generations of Israelites had added their defilements to the Lord's temple and its services. Such eventually brought about the punishment of ancient Israel. The prophet is to remind the house of Israel that their abominations had been sufficient. Among the errors which were directed against them was their bringing into the holy sanctuary those who were not permitted to be there; they had polluted the temple by such practices. They had not kept charge of God's holy things (the items and services of the temple); instead, they had set up for themselves certain ones who served the sinful priesthood.
 - d. No defilement will be tolerated by the Lord in his new "temple" (the church of Christ). Any change to God's arrangement is more than sufficient to incur his displeasure and punishment. Modern-day change agents have failed to learn from the errors of their counterparts in ancient Israel.
 2. Verses 9-16: " Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that *is* among the children of Israel. And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, *having* charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy *place*: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. But I will make them
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keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge."

- a. Those who had violated God's trust would not be permitted to occupy their former positions in the temple being described. They had gone astray into sin, and had to suffer the consequences. And they would be given demotions. But those the Lord called "the sons of Zadok" would be given the honor of ministering to God in this symbolic temple. "They have kept the charge of the Lord. His reward is that they shall come near Him in worshipful service. Nearness to Him is their rich reward. We are all priests of God if we have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered to us (I Peter 2:5,9; Rom. 6:17-18; I John 1:7). We should emulate these portrayed in verses 15-16 and avoid the poor example of those delineated in verses 9-14" (Taylor, MSOP, p.359).
- b. The information contained in this section of Ezekiel was originally intended for those Israelites who had been captured and deported from Palestine to Babylon, there to endure captivity. The message was one of hope for the future, but it carried words of warning and caution. The figurative language is employed in order to present the material in a graphic and impressive manner; it was also presented in this way because the time was not then right for the details of God eternal plan to be unveiled. It would not be until the full revelation of the New Testament that men could know and understand that great plan, and enjoy the benefits thereof.
 - 1) Matthew 13:14-17: "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*."
 - 2) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
 - 3) 1 Peter 1:9-12: "Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."
 - 4) Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
 - 5) Ephesians 3:3-11: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- 6) 1 Corinthians 2:9-13: "But as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And *which* entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed *them* through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual *words*" (ASV).

B. Ezekiel 44:17-31: The Conduct and Support of the Priests.

1. Verses 17-22: "And it shall come to pass, *that* when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird *themselves* with any thing that causeth sweat. And when they go forth into the utter court, *even* into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before."
 - a. The apparel and other aspects of the dress and conduct on the part of the priestly individuals are presented in this part of the chapter. Proper clothing is demanded; linen garments are required; wool is not allowed. No clothing that causes sweat is permitted. They are not to shave their heads, but they are not to let their hair grow long; they shall "poll their heads" [trim their hair].
 - b. The priests are not to drink wine; they are not to marry widows or divorced women, but only virgins who are Israelites. Under Christ, each Christian is a priest (1 Pet. 2:5,9); we are always members of the Lord's body, and cannot engage in any activity that would defile the Head (Christ). The Lord has restored in the gospel God's original plan for marriage—one man and one woman, for life. He allows one exception in the case of divorce (Matt. 19:9). Since the text is a *symbolic* presentation of the gospel system, we should not press this figurative language to an extreme.
 2. Verses 23-27: "And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; *and* they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. In verses 23-24, the requirement is given for these priests to teach the difference between the profane and the sacred. There is such a thing as absolute truth. Some things are sacred (holy) and some things are profane (secular and unholy). Judgments are to be made with God's word as the standard. Those who are acceptable to God will observe his will in all matters, including worship.
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- b. "Bodily defilements are to be avoided. Authorized offerings are to be made" (Taylor, *ibid.*). Using the Mosaic arrangement to present the picture, the Lord is showing that it is his will that we observe his word in all matters.
3. Verses 28-31: "And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I *am* their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I *am* their possession. They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering: and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. And the first of all the firstfruits of all *things*, and every oblation of all, of every *sort* of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast."
 - a. "Priests are to be cared for as touching life's essentials. Dietary legislation is given lest priests eat that which is forbidden" (Taylor, *ibid.*, pp.359f).
 - b. Under the Mosaic system, the Levites were not given an inheritance in the land. The other tribes were provided with their own land, but the Levites were scattered through the other tribes. They had certain cities and a certain amount of land nearby. Being the priestly tribe, they were supported by the offerings of the other tribes.
 - c. Under the Christian system, God has no separate priesthood, but each saint is able to approach God directly through Christ, without having to go through some human mediator. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.....But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:5,9).
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EZEKIEL 45

A. Ezekiel 45:1-8: The Land, the Sanctuary, the City, the Priest, and the Prince.

1. Verses 1-5: "Moreover, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the LORD, an holy portion of the land: the length *shall be* the length of five and twenty thousand *reeds*, and the breadth *shall be* ten thousand. This *shall be* holy in all the borders thereof round about. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred *in length*, with five hundred *in breadth*, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary *and* the most holy *place*. The holy *portion* of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD: and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers."

 - a. In keeping with the general theme of this section of Ezekiel, the prophet may be continuing the symbolic depiction of the arrangement under the New Covenant, using various features of the Mosaic system to represent the Messiah's order.
 - b. Some scholars think the prophet is speaking with reference to the temple and its features the exiles were to setup when they returned to the land. If this is the case, the division of the land was to again be made among the returnees. "Measurements are given for the holy land portion. In the vision, Ezekiel sees the measurements spelled out by God relative to the sanctuary—their central place of worship. Ample were the provisions made for this important edifice. Personnel was required in sanctuary services. Priests and Levites are cared for as touching lodging needs, whose houses were to be near the sanctuary" (Taylor, MSOP, p.360).
 - c. "That no such methodical distribution of Canaan ever took place, or for that matter could have taken place amongst the returned exiles, should be proof sufficient that the prophet here moves in the region of the ideal and symbolical rather than of the real and literal. Ye shall offer an oblation—literally, lift up a heave offering (comp. Ezek 44:80; Ex 25:2,3; 29:28; 30:13,14; Lev 7:14,32; 22:12; Num 15:19; 18:24)—unto the Lord, an holy portion of the land; literally, a holy (portion) from the land. Very significantly, in the new partition of Palestine the Lord's portion should be the first to be marked off and solemnly dedicated to Jehovah for the purposes to be forthwith specified" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].

2. Verses 6-8: "And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy *portion*: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. And a *portion shall be* for the prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy *portion*, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation of the holy *portion*, and before the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward: and the length *shall be* over against one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border. In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and *the rest of* the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes."

 - a. "The prince or princes will live in close proximity to God's sanctuary and His people as well. Princes and rulers shall reign in the realm of righteousness and in the sphere of service. No longer were they to oppress people as pre-exile rulers had done with sinful frequency. Nehemiah is a later example of a ruler over God's people who swayed a righteous scepter over his fortunate subjects" (Taylor, *ibid.*, pp.360f).
 - b. Nehemiah presents an excellent example for modern authority-figures, both sacred and secular. "Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the

twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is*, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that *had been* before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work. Moreover *there were* at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that *are* about us. Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily *was* one ox *and* six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people. Think upon me, my God, for good, *according* to all that I have done for this people" (Neh. 5:14-19). News reports are plentiful regarding the excesses and errors of government officials; and the faithful of God have observed many preachers, elders, deacons and others who have violated the trust they have been given.

B. Ezekiel 45:9-12: Justice to be Given.

1. Verse 9: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. Before the Israelites were turned over to their oppressors (the Assyrians and Babylonians), those in authority, as well as the merchants, had oppressed and robbed those under their thumb. Such prophets as Amos decried these sinful practices! "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6).
 - b. "Princes are enjoined to remove violence and spoil (getting all one can from subjects ruled over) and practice justice and equity toward all. Various measurements are to be uniform with legal demands. God gives legislation touching their various offerings. Before the exile they had been required to offer sacrifices; subsequent to the exile they were to become again a sacrifice-offering people. Sounds like pattern authority is demanded—the very thing that is so odious to Change Agents among us! Grain and animal offerings were to continue until the Ultimate Sacrifice of all ages was made on Execution Hill with the Lord of Glory nailed to an old rugged cross" (Taylor, MSOP, pp.361f).
2. Verses 10-12: "Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. And the shekel *shall be* twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh."
 - a. The covetous in ancient Israel often followed crooked practices in their business dealings; they would have one set of scales they used in buying, and another for selling.
 - 1) Hosea 12:7: "*He is* a merchant, the balances of deceit *are* in his hand: he loveth to oppress."
 - 2) Amos 8:5: "Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?" These merchants were anxious for the religious days to be over so they could get back to what was more important to them—crooked buying and selling.
 - 3) Micah 6:11: "Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?"
 - b. "The standard weights were lost when the Chaldeans destroyed the temple. The three-fold enumeration of shekels, twenty, twenty-five, fifteen, probably refers to coins of different value, representing respectively so many shekels, the three collectively making up a *maneh*. By weighing these together against the *maneh*, a test was afforded whether they severally had their proper weight..." (JFB, p.372).

C. Ezekiel 45:13-25: Sacrifices.

1. Verses 13-17: "This *is* the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley: Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, *ye shall offer* the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, *which is* an homer of ten baths; for ten baths *are* an homer: And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel; for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord GOD. All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. And it shall be the prince's part *to give* burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel."
 - a. "In these oblations there is a progression as to the relation between the kind and the quantity: of the corn the sixth of a tenth—*i.e.*, a sixtieth part of the quantity specified; of the oil the tenth of a tenth—*i.e.*, an hundredth part; and of the flock one from every 200" (JFB, p.372).
 - b. "Their worship to God and service administered to others were structural or regulated. It is amangingly amazing that Change Agents among us see no structure and regulation of worship under Christ. They are nothing but blind leaders leading their blind devotees! There is **no** justification for either the leaders or those led" (Taylor, MSOP, p.362).
 2. Verses 18-20: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put *it* upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. And so thou shalt do the seventh *day* of the month for every one that erreth, and for *him that is* simple: so shall ye reconcile the house."
 - a. "The year is to begin with a consecration service, not mentioned under the Levitical service, not mentioned under the Levitical law; but an earnest of it is given in the Feast of Dedication of the second temple, which celebrated its purification by Judas Maccabeus, after its defilement by Antiochus" (JFB, p.372).
 - b. "The Mosaic law had prescribed for the new moons generally the sin-offering of a he-goat, in addition to the burnt-offerings and meat-offerings (Num. 28:15); and, besides this, had also distinguished the new-moons day of the seventh month by a special feast-offering to be added to the regular new-moon's sacrifice, consisting of a sin-offering of a he-goat, and burnt-offerings and meat-offerings (Num. 29:2-6). This distinguishing of the seventh month by a special new-moon's sacrifice is omitted in Ezekiel..." (Keil, pp.332f).
 3. Verses 21-25: "In the first *month*, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock *for* a sin offering. And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily *for* a sin offering. And he shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah. In the seventh *month*, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil."
 - a. Information regarding the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles is given, but no mention is made of Pentecost. Nothing is indicated as to why this feast was not included, and speculation is useless.
 - b. "As a new solemnity, the feast of consecration is to prepare for the passover, so the passover itself is to have different sacrifices from those of the Mosaic law. Instead of one ram and seven lambs for the daily burnt offering, there are to be seven bullocks and seven rams....So also, whereas the feast of tabernacles had its own offerings, which diminished as the days of the feast advanced, here the
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same are appointed as on the passover” (JFB, p.373).

EZEKIEL 46

A. Ezekiel 46:1-15: Other Sacrifices.

1. Verses 1-8: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons. And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath day *shall be* six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. And the meat offering *shall be* an ephah for a ram, and the meat offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And in the day of the new moon *it shall be* a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. And he shall prepare a meat offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof."
 - a. "The chief magistrate was always obliged to attend the public worship of God, as well as the priest, to show that the civil and ecclesiastical states were both under the same government of the Lord; and that no one was capable of being prince or priest, who did not acknowledge God in all his ways. It is no wonder that those lands mourn, where neither the *established priest* nor the *civil magistrate* either fear or love God" (Clarke, pp.547f).
 - b. "That gate of the inner court facing the east was to be closed the six working days (Sunday through Friday) but to be opened the sabbath day (weekly) and during the day of the new moon (monthly). Rulers, priests, and the people are given instructions pertaining to worship....Entrance and exit legislation is given. God's worship is always along lines of order" (Taylor, MSOP, p.362). "For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints....Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:33,40).
 2. Verses 9-12: "But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth. And in the feasts and in the solemnities the meat offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily unto the LORD, *one* shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth *one* shall shut the gate."
 - a. "As the preceding verse referred to the prince's entrance into and departure from the inner gate, this was intended to regulate the movements of the prince's subjects when they should enter the outer court at any of the festal seasons—not the high festivals alone, such as the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles....In order to prevent confusion, and that all might be conducted with propriety (comp. 1 Cor 14:40), no one should depart by the gate through which he had entered, but by the opposite, i.e. he who had entered by the north gate should retire through the south gate, and vice versa" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 - b. The instructions are very specific. Those who entered by the north gate for the worship activities were told to depart by way of the south gate; those who entered by the south gate, were to leave through
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the north gate. After the prince has departed, the gate was to be closed.

- c. “Daily were to be their offerings. Judaism was not an annual, monthly, or weekly religion; it was a daily one” (Taylor, MSOP, pp.362f).
3. Verses 13-15: “Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the LORD *of* a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it every morning. And thou shalt prepare a meat offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the LORD. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat offering, and the oil, every morning *for* a continual burnt offering.”
 - a. God would not accept imperfect animals in the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law. Later, during the time of Malachi, the Lord rebuked the Israelites who offered crippled animals. "A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 1:6-8). God is no less demanding of us who live under the gospel system: our worship is to be sincerely offered in harmony with the truth of God’s word (John 4:23-24).
 - b. Worship is a superb privilege and an awesome responsibility! Think of it! In worship we have the honor of tendering our heart-felt praise to the Creator of the Universe! We offer it to the Almighty through his Son, Jesus Christ.
 - c. Christianity is a daily [even hourly] religion, but for some, it is only seasonal—Easter and Christmas (neither of which is sanctioned by the New Testament). We may pray at any hour of the day or night; we may find many occasions outside the assemblies to sing; we help those in need as opportunity arises; we may find openings to teach the lost and encourage the saved many times through the week. And on the Lord’s day, we are privileged to assemble with the saints for the purpose of worship.

B. Ezekiel 46:16-24: Other Details.

1. Verses 16-18: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it *shall be* their possession by inheritance. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them. Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; *but* he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.”
 - a. “The prince is educated touching gifts he makes to his sons and to his servants. Gifts given to the latter remain only until the year of liberty (Jubilee), and then they return to the giving princes. The prince is warned lest he take by oppression that which belongs to his subjects to give to his sons. What he gives his sons is to be from his inheritance—not that which he steals from his subjects” (Taylor, MSOP, p.363).
 - b. “The prince’s possession is to be inalienable, and any portion given to a servant is to revert to his sons at the year of jubilee, that he may have no temptation to spoil his people of their inheritance as formerly (cf. The case of Ahab and Naboth’s vineyard, 1 Ki. 21.) The mention of the year of jubilee implies that there is something literal meant, besides the spiritual sense. The jubilee year was restored after the captivity. (*Josephus’* Antiquities, xiv,10. 6; 1 Macc. 6:49.)” (JFB, p.374).
2. Verses 19-24: “After he brought me through the entry, which *was* at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there *was* a place on the two sides westward. Then said he unto me, This *is* the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, where they shall bake the meat offering; that they bear *them* not out into the utter court,

to sanctify the people. Then he brought me forth into the utter court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court *there was* a court. In the four corners of the court *there were* courts joined of forty *cubits* long and thirty broad: these four corners *were* of one measure. And *there was* a row *of building* round about in them, round about them four, and *it was* made with boiling places under the rows round about. Then said he unto me, These *are* the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people."

- a. "The prophet had entered by the north gate of the court of the priests, where he had seen, a little before, the glory of the Lord, and where he had received all those directions from chapt, 44:4,5, to this chapter. From that gate...he entered the vestibule by a gate which was by the side of the apartments of the priests, which were along this aisle...to the right of the vestibule towards the west" (Clarke, p.549).
 - b. It will be remembered that the events described in this context took place only in a vision (cf. 44:1ff); they are not to be understood as literal events which the prophet experienced. The temple was symbolic, even though it is pictured as being at Jerusalem; the prophet was still in Babylonia.
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EZEKIEL 47

A. Ezekiel 47:1-12: The Water of Life.

1. Verses 1-5: "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house *stood toward* the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south *side* of the altar. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters *were* to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters *were* to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters *were* to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over."
 - a. "Ezekiel, after having made the whole compass of the court of the people, is brought back by the north gate into the courts of the priests; and, having reached the gate of the temple, he saw waters which had their spring under the threshold of that gate, that looked towards the east; and which, passing to the south of the altar of burnt-offerings on the right of the temple, ran from the west to the east, that they might fall into the brook Kidron, and thence be carried into the Dead Sea. Literally, no such waters were ever in the temple; and because there were none, Solomon had what is called the brazen sea made, which held water for the use of the temple" (Clarke, pp.549f).
 - b. Jamieson states: "The happy fruit to the earth at large of God's dwelling with Israel in holy fellowship is, that the blessing is no longer restricted to the one people and locality, but is to be diffused with comprehensive catholicity through the whole world" (p.376).
 - c. In this symbolic picture, Ezekiel is shown a stream of water issuing from the threshold of the temple, growing deeper as it continued its journey, first to the ankles, then to the knees, and then to the loins, until it reached such a depth it could not be crossed.
 - d. One view of the passage is to understand the vision as depicting the richness of God's word and blessings under the gospel. There are some things easily grasped (pictured by the water that was only up to the ankles); other items are deeper (to the knees and loins); and other subjects are beyond our complete comprehension (too deep to be crossed). Brother Taylor's view stated below [A2e] may be more accurate, but this view has some merit:
 - 1) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are* revealed *belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - 5) 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen."

- 6) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 7) Romans 11:33: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"
2. Verses 6-12: "And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this*? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river *were* very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: *which being* brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, *that* every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, *that* the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; they shall be a *place* to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."
- a. The prophet was taken back to the brink of the river, and saw a beautiful sight—the river was lined on both sides with many trees. The river furnished life-giving water to the trees. This reminds us of Psalm 1, where the righteous are described with similar language: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa. 1:1-3).
 - b. With the geographical features of Palestine in mind, we remember that the Jordan river flows south through the rough country, finally emptying into the Dead Sea. "In its bituminous waters no vegetable or animal life is said to be found. But now death is to give place to life in Judea, and throughout the world, as symbolized by the healing of these death-pervaded waters..." (JFB, p.377). The river not only gives life to that which is along its banks, but it also gives life to the Dead Sea.
 - c. We are further reminded of the words of Christ to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, in which he spoke of the everlasting water he offers: "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:10-14). Compare: "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).
 - d. In the final chapter of the New Testament, in an evident reference to heaven, another occurrence of this language is used: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:1-2).
 - e. "It seems safe to say that here we have a vision of the gospel dispensation which began as a small
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stream in Jerusalem in Acts 2 and became an ever-deepening river as redemption's sweet story is preached and obeyed in Judaea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. A literal fulfillment of this between 536 B.C. and A.D. 33 seems out of the question" (Taylor, MSOP, pp.364f).

B. Ezekiel 47:13-23: Boundaries of the Land.

1. Verses 13-21: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; This *shall be* the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph *shall have two* portions. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: *concerning* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. And this *shall be* the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; Hamath, Berothah, Sibram, which *is* between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazarhatticon, which *is* by the coast of Hauran. And the border from the sea shall be Hazarenan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And *this is* the north side. And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel *by* Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And *this is* the east side. And the south side southward, from Tamar *even* to the waters of strife *in* Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And *this is* the south side southward. The west side also *shall be* the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This *is* the west side. So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel."
 - a. Diligent Bible students know of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, regarding the land of Canaan which their descendants would possess. The land was divided among the Israelites following their wilderness experiences. God used Joshua in leading the nation into the land and the occupation of that fruitful inheritance. "And, behold, this day *I am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:14-15).
 - b. Joshua then warned them that God would remove them from the land if they should turn away from keeping his law: "When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you" (Josh. 23:16). They fell away numerous time (cf. Judges), and finally, God allowed the Assyrians to remove the ten northern tribes (721 B.C.), and later removed the two tribes which comprised the Southern Kingdom (606—586 B.C.).
 - c. After a total of seventy years of captivity in Babylon (606—536 B.C.), God would open the way for them to return to Canaan. "This section deals with the twelve tribes again inhabiting this land, which disproves the Ten Lost Tribes fallacy. Reuben lost birthright privileges, and in his place Joseph's two sons were made the tribal heads and numbered among the twelve tribes. Borders are named, and tribal divisions are provided. Strangers are amply included" (Taylor, MSOP, p.365).
2. Verses 22-23: "And it shall come to pass, *that* ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, *that* in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give *him* his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD."
 - a. It was necessary that the Jews be in Palestine in order for Christ to come and fulfill all of the many predictions regarding his birth, life, and the completion of his mission. They were now in captivity, but they would have the opportunity to go home when the time came.
 - b. Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall

be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

- c. Luke 24:46-49: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - d. Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - e. Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
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EZEKIEL 48

A. Ezekiel 48:1-29: The Land Assigned.

1. Verses 1-7: “Now these *are* the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazarenan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east *and* west; *a portion for* Dan. And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, *a portion for* Asher. And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, *a portion for* Naphtali. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, *a portion for* Manasseh. And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, *a portion for* Ephraim. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, *a portion for* Reuben. And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, *a portion for* Judah.”
 - a. “The lands are divided into portions of ideal exactness, running alongside of each other, the whole breadth from west to east, standing in a common relation to the temple in the centre,—seven tribes’ portions on the north, five in the smaller division in the south. The portions of the city, the temple, the princes and the priesthood, are in the middle, not within the boundaries of any tribe, all alike having a common interest in them. Judah has the place of honour next the centre on the north, Benjamin the corresponding place of honour next the centre on the south, because of the adherence of these two to the temple ordinances and to the house of David for so long, when the others deserted them. Dan, on the contrary, so long locally and morally semi-heathen (Judg. 18), is to have the least honourable place, at the extreme north. For the same reason, St. John (Rev. 7:5-8) omits Dan altogether” (JFB, p.380).
 - b. The order of their mention in this passage, lined up from north to south, is Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah.
2. Verses 8-14: “And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand *reeds in* breadth, and *in* length as one of the *other* parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD *shall be* of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth. And for them, *even* for the priests, shall be *this* holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand *in length*, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof. *It shall be* for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. And *this* oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites. And over against the border of the priests the Levites *shall have* five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length *shall be* five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the firstfruits of the land: for *it is* holy unto the LORD.”
 - a. “In verses 8-14, area provisions are legislated for the location of the sanctuary or temple, which was always the center of Jewish thought, life, worship, and service. It is located at the border of Judah. Provisions are made for the priestly sons of Zadok. They are singled out for the previous loyalty to the Lord when others rebelliously strayed from truth. This area belonging to priests and levites was not to be sold, exchanged, or tampered with in any fashion” (Taylor, MSOP, pp.365f).
 - b. “Verse 14 states, ‘for it is holy unto the Lord.’ Change Agents among us who seek to restructure the Lord’s church are guilty of this very infamous infraction; they are tampering with that which belongs to the Lord—not to them. They did not build it; they did not purchase it; they do not constitute its foundation; they are not its head; they **surely** are not its Savior. They ought to keep their hands off the precious bride of Jesus Christ” (ibid., p.366),

3. Verses 15-29: “And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane *place* for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof. And these *shall be* the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred. And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy *portion shall be* ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy *portion*; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. All the oblation *shall be* five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare, with the possession of the city. And the residue *shall be* for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city, over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house *shall be* in the midst thereof. Moreover from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, *being* in the midst of *that* which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, Benjamin *shall have a portion*. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon *shall have a portion*. And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar *a portion*. And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side, Zebulun *a portion*. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad *a portion*. And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar *unto* the waters of strife *in* Kadesh, *and* to the river toward the great sea. This *is* the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these *are* their portions, saith the Lord GOD.”
- a. “The territory of the Levites was twenty-five thousand square cubits, ver. 20. But their city was only four thousand five hundred square cubits, see ver. 13 and 16; there remained, therefore, ten thousand cubits in breadth, by twenty-five thousand in length, on the east and west sides, were reserved for a sort of second city; or for suburbs where laymen might dwell who were employed by those priests and Levites who lodged in the temple and the city, ver. 18. Another space of one thousand cubits in breadth, by twenty-five thousand in length, which extended only from north to south, was for fields and gardens appointed for the support of those lay servants” (Clarke, p.553).
- b. The prince and his possessions are provided for by the statements of verses 21-22. The prince, if the reference is taken to be the restored nation of Israel, is the civil ruler. Although all these many details are difficult to assimilate and apply, it is manifest that there is no evidence in any of the material in support of the millennial and dispensational concepts of a literal restoration of ancient Israel in a literal reign of Christ on earth for a literal one-thousand years; such a theory has no basis in the Bible.

B. Ezekiel 48:30-35: The City.

1. Verses 30-34: “And these *are* the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures. And the gates of the city *shall be* after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. At the west side four thousand and five hundred, *with* their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali.”
- a. These verses describe the gates on the north side, the ones pertaining to Reuben, Judah, and Levi; the gates on the east side pertained to Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan; the gates on the south side pertained to Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun; the gates on the west side pertained to Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.
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- b. 2 Peter 3:8-12: "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" This statement is exceeding plain and emphatic; at the Lord's second coming, the earth will be utterly destroyed (burned up; dissolved), along with everything upon it. Therefore, the materialistic theories of the millennialists and dispensationalists are false.
2. Verse 35: "*It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.*"
- a. "The four closing words of Ezekiel's prophetic masterpiece are, 'The Lord is there.' What wonderful consolation for this prophet of hope in the gloom and doom of an extended captivity" (Taylor, MSOP, p.367).
- b. "Premillennial proponents do this [*eisegesis*—read into the text what is not there] with chapters 40-48. In these latter nine chapters they can see **nothing** but modern Jews in Palestine and an enormous millennial temple crowning the summit of Moriah's mount with full Mosaic mandates intact—even animal sacrifices! ... (A)n insult to God's glorious temple—the church—and to the efficacy of Christ's blood of full atonement of sins. Furthermore, it has not dawned on their superficial brains...that a future resorting to Mosaic ordinances means apostasy, as per Galatians 5:1-4, and **all** of the epistle to the fickle Hebrews. In **no** sense of the term is there any support from these Scriptures or warrant from God's Word as touching lethal premillennialism—one of the greatest frauds and curses of modern times" (Taylor, MSOP, pp.367f).
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Will The Old Testament Temple be Restored?

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The basic features of the unscriptural premillennial view are these:

1. The kingdom of God is not now in existence. They think that Christ came to establish an earthly kingdom, and reign on David's throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years, but when the Jews rejected him, he was forced to set up the church instead of the kingdom.
2. Just before Christ comes, there will be a time of great apostasy and wickedness. The false prophets of millennialism have convinced many that these events are impending. Our present generation lives in the "last days" immediately preceding the coming of Christ; his coming is said to be imminent.
3. When Christ returns, only the righteous dead will be raised (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The passage cited has no support for the millennial theories.
4. The righteous who are still living at the Lord's return will be secretly caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. This operation they call *The Rapture*. This is easily shown to be false.
5. The saints who have met the Lord in the air will be with him there for seven years, during which time the *Great Tribulation* will be taking place on earth.
 - a. The Dispensationalists take this view; the premillennialists think the saints remain on earth during the tribulation. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:21-22). The context shows that this tribulation has already occurred: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:34).
 - b. During the "great tribulation" on earth, the Russians will invade the land of Israel. (Ezek. 38:14-16). The Lord will fight against this great army and defeat it (38:22-23). Now that the USSR has faded from the scene in our world, the millennialists are left with an empty sack!
 - 1) Ezekiel 38:14-16: "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know *it*? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes."
 - 2) Ezekiel 38:22-23: "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that *are* with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."
6. Having defeated his enemies, Christ will then establish his kingdom in Jerusalem, and he and his saints will reign there for a thousand years. But over whom will they reign?
7. During the millennium, Satan will be bound. He will be loosed for a short time at the close of the 1000-year reign. Wickedness will have a short-lived triumph while Satan is loosed, but Christ will put down this rebellion in what DeHaan calls "the last war of human history" (p.14). All of this is based on a literal (but inconsistent) interpretation of Revelation 20. The scenario is given as follows: Satan will find those who obeyed the Lord in the millennium only because their obedience was

coerced. "Eager to rebel, and deceived by Satan, they will try to overcome Christ and His people by attacking the saints and the holy city. In this final rebellion, however, they will meet with sudden and supernatural destruction" (p.14).

8. The "Great White Throne Judgment" will take place. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:11-15).
 9. The "new heaven and new earth" will be the new home of the redeemed. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God" (Rev. 21:1-3).
- B. It is in regards to the Tribulation and Millennium that the errorists assert that the temple will be restored.
1. They claim: *During this tribulation, the Jewish nation will be gathered back to Palestine, and the whole nation will be converted to Christ (Rom. 11:26). Also, the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and animal sacrifices will be resumed.*
 2. "There are yet two Temples to be built in Jerusalem. One will be constructed just prior to or during the early days of the Tribulation period. This is the Temple spoken of by the Prophet Daniel. But another Temple, more vast than any of its predecessors, will be built in the holy city of Jerusalem during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, a period known as the Millennium. The prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Micah gave many details concerning this Temple" (Hartman, *Israel My Glory*, p.8).
 3. "At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus Christ will return to earth in all His glory. He will establish His Kingdom and throne in Jerusalem and begin His thousand-year reign. A glorious Millennial Temple will be constructed, far surpassing the Temples built by Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod. Through the Prophet Ezekiel, the Lord said that this Temple will be 'the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever' (Ezek. 43:7). The Lord will be there" (ibid., p.9).

II. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH REGARDING THE RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE?

A. It is incumbent on us to turn to God's Word if we are to discern the truth on this matter.

1. Two prominent passages that relate to the subject:
 - a. Acts 26:6-7: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. **For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.**"
 - b. Acts 28:16-20: "And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar;

not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: **because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.**"

2. In these two passages, Paul states that he was presently imprisoned because he preached about the hope of Israel. It was on account of the fact that he preached the truth on the hope of Israel that the Jewish religious authorities pressed the Roman governor to execute the apostle. It is most obvious that what Paul preached was not to the liking of the Jewish religious leaders. Their idea of Israel's hope was in direct conflict with what the inspired apostle affirmed.
 - a. If Paul had preached what the Jews wanted to hear on this subject, he would not have been in his present trouble. If he had preached what they wanted to hear on this matter, they would see him as a compatriot.
 - b. But what Paul preached about Israel's hope was not what national Israel wanted. They were looking for an earthly Messiah who would take the reins of government, throw off the Roman yoke, and subdue the other nations around them. Their greatest hope was to regain the power and prestige and grandeur that prevailed under the reigns of David and Solomon.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 8:3: "David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates."
 - 2) 1 Kings 4:20-21: "Judah and Israel *were* many, as the sand which *is* by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life."
 - 3) 2 Chronicles 9:26: "And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt."

B. Millennialists today are preaching the same doctrine the Jews wanted during the time of Paul.

1. It is abundantly clear, therefore, that they are not preaching the same doctrine Paul preached.
2. What the millennialists teach is what the Jews of the first century wanted and expected. Both the Jews and the millennialists are wrong.
3. Before the temple could be restored, national Israel would have to be restored, with all of its Old Testament features intact. Without those features, it would not be *Israel*.

III. IF THE TEMPLE IS TO BE RESTORED, OTHER ITEMS MUST ALSO BE RESTORED.

A. The Old Testament kingdom must be revived, with Christ (the Messiah) reigning over it.

1. Will the Old Testament kingdom be restored? We will allow the Scriptures to answer.
2. First, remember that there was no king in Israel until the nation rebelled against God. God gave them a king, but it was not his will that they have a king; he allowed them to obtain their demanded king as a means of showing them their folly and bringing upon them the just punishment for their rebellion against God's rule over them.
 - a. 1 Samuel 8:4-9: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of

the king that shall reign over them.”

- b. Hosea 13:9-11: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help. I will be thy king: where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath." God had warned them centuries earlier (through Moses) that the time would come when they would demand a king; he gave them ample warning to avoid that grievous error (Deut. 17:14-20).
 - c. It was never God’s plan for them to have a king. The theory of the millennialists is built on the same foundation that ancient Israel used in making a demand for an earthly king. An earthly king was never a part of God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). [Knowing the rebellious nature of the Israelites, God predicted their rebellion and warned against it (Deut. 17); he was able to work out his plans despite their rebellion].
 - d. It is contrary to both common sense and the Scriptures to assert that God will restore the earthly kingdom of Israel which he opposed being established in the first place!
3. Also, God foretold and promised that not a single descendant of Jechoniah [also known as Coniah and Jehoiachin] would ever *have a prosperous reign*: "*Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah*" (Jer. 22:28-30). Matthew 1:11-16 shows that Jesus is a descendant of Jechoniah [Coniah, Jehoiachin].
- a. Holman’s PC Bible Dictionary says of Jehoiachin: “In 2 Kings 24:6, the son and successor of Jehoiakim as king of Judah. He was eighteen years old when he came to the throne late in 598 B.C., and he reigned for three months in Jerusalem before being taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon....Jehoiachin evidently was a throne name taken at the time of accession to the kingship. Jehoiachin’s original name seems to have been Jeconiah or Coniah. He retained the title ‘king of Judah’ even in Exile....”
 - b. His uncle Zedekiah was the last king to reign over the Jews, but he was not of the lineage of Jechoniah; Zedekiah was a vassal king, appointed to the throne by his master, the king of Babylon (2 Kings 24:17-20).
 - c. Since God is always true to his word and cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), it is impossible for any descendant of Jechoniah to ever rule on earth with God’s approval and blessing. Therefore, Jesus Christ cannot and will not ever rule on earth! Hence, the earthly kingdom of Israel will never be restored; and since that kingdom is forever gone from the earth, the temple worship it had at its core will never be restored.
- B. The Old Testament Law of Moses must be revived and given its former authority as God’s exclusive law.
1. Millennialists, as is true with sectarians generally, fail to make the proper distinction between the Mosaic Law and the Gospel of Christ. They want to restore the inferior and displace the superior. In effect, they want to exalt Moses to a superior position and relegate Christ to a lesser role. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). To understand the Bible, we must rightly divide its truth. The Book of Hebrews and other New Testament passages, demonstrate the vast superiority of the Gospel of Christ to the Law of Moses:
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CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
First: Heb. 10:9	Second: Heb. 10:9
One Nation: Deut. 5:2-3	All Nations: Matt. 28:19
Dedicated by Animal Blood: Heb. 9:19	Dedicated by Christ's Blood: Heb. 9:15-16
Moses the Mediator: Ex. 20:19	Christ the Mediator: Heb. 12:24
Faulty: Heb. 8:7	Better; Perfect: Heb. 8:6; Jas. 1:25
Shadow: Heb. 9:24; 10:1	Reality: Heb. 10:1; 8:1-2
Blood of Animals: Heb. 9:19-20; 10:4	Blood of Christ: Heb. 9:12
Carnal Ordinances: Heb. 9:10	Spiritual Sacrifices: 1 Pet. 2:5
Purify Flesh: Heb. 9:13	Purify Soul: 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:21; Heb. 10:22
Natural Birth: Gen. 17:1ff	Spiritual Birth: John 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:22-23
Infants Included: Gen. 17:1ff	Responsible Persons: Mark 16:15-16
Temporal Rewards: Ps. 105:10-11	Eternal Rewards: 1 Pet. 1:4
Glorious: 2 Cor. 3:9-10	Exceeding in Glory: 2 Cor. 3:10-11
Yearly Atoning Sacrifice: Heb. 10:1ff	One Sacrifice: Heb. 9:26-28
Bondwoman: Gal. 4:30-31	Free Woman: Heb. 4:30-31
High Priests Had Sins: Heb. 7:28	High Priest Perfect: Heb. 7:27
Ministration of Death: 2 Cor. 3:9	Ministration of Righteousness: 2 Cor. 3:9
Priests Without Oath: Heb. 7:21	With Oath: Heb. 7:21
Priests by Carnal Commandment: Heb. 7:16	Priest by Endless Life: Heb. 7:16
Priests from Tribe of Levi: Heb. 7:11	High Priest from Judah: Heb. 7:14
Priests Died: Heb. 7:23	High Priest Eternal: Heb. 7:24
Sins Remembered: Heb. 10:1-4	Sins Removed: Heb. 10:1-4; 8:12
Written in Stone: 2 Cor. 3	Written in Heart: Heb. 8:10
Servitude: Rom. 8:15	Sonship: Rom. 8:15
Letter: 2 Cor. 3:6	Spirit: 2 Cor. 3:6
Not remove Sins: Heb. 10:11; Acts 13:38-39	Saved to Uttermost: Heb. 7:25; 8:12
Passed Away: 2 Cor. 3:11	Remains: 2 Cor. 3:11; Jude 3

2. God foretold and promised to replace the Law of Moses: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).
 3. One of the purposes served by Christ's first advent was to replace the Law of Moses with his Everlasting Gospel (Rev. 14:6).
 - a. Matthew 5:17-18: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." John 1:17: "For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."
 - b. Hebrews 8:6-13 "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away."
 - c. Hebrews 10:5-10: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. **He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.** By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all.*"
 - d. 2 Corinthians 3:6-18: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is*
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glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."

4. In view of the undeniable fact that the gospel of Christ has replaced the inferior law of Moses, it is inconceivable that God would ever restore Moses' law. Therefore, the temple and its services, which formed the focal point of the Mosaic Law, will not be restored.

C. The Old Testament temple must be rebuilt at Jerusalem, with all of its forms and features.

1. These forms and features include the office of the high priest, the Aaronic priesthood, animal sacrifices, feast days, and all the other ceremonies and rites associated with it during the Mosaic Age.
2. Christ is to serve as priest at the same time he serves as king. "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name *is* The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6:12-13).
 - a. If the millennial theory is right, and Christ will sit on a literal throne as king over the earthly kingdom at Jerusalem, to fulfill the prophecy that he would serve as high priest; it asserts that he will be a priest on earth.
 - b. But the Bible states clearly that he cannot be a priest on earth: "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law" (Heb. 8:4). He is from the wrong tribe to be a priest; the tribe of Judah was to be the source of the kings (Gen. 49:10) and the tribe of Levi was to furnish all the priests.
 - 1) Hebrews 7:9-19: "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God."
 - 2) Hebrews 9:6-15: "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God*. But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; *Which stood* only in meats and drinks, and

divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

3. The bloody sacrifices offered under the Mosaic Law were from animals, which the gospel shows to be ineffectual in removing guilt of sin.
 - a. Hebrews 9:22: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."
 - b. Hebrews 10:1-4: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."
 - c. Only the blood of Christ has the efficacy to take away guilt: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things....But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).
 4. Therefore, the temple, with its Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices, will never be restored as God's operational plan.
- D. The land of Canaan must be parceled out to the Israelites according to the Old Testament plan.
1. "It would mean a re-allotment of the various estates and inheritances given to Israel in the conquest and settlement of the land under Joshua. It would mean to restore the borders of what was once 'the Lord's land,' mentioned in Gen. 12:7, when the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, 'Unto thee will I give all this land'; and later in Gen. 13:15 when he said, 'For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it'; and again in Gen. 15:18 where God told Abram that the whole sweep of the land would be 'from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates'; that vast stretch of land in which in Gen. 17:8 God told Abram that he was a stranger, all the land of Canaan; that he would give it to 'thy seed after thee'; which Moses said in Ex. 6:4-8 was 'the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers;' and the land which Joshua said in Josh. 21:43-45 that God gave them when they entered Canaan, 'all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers,' which he said they possessed, in which they dwelt, 'according to all that he sware unto their fathers,' of which 'there failed not ought' of anything because 'all came to pass'"(Wallace, pp.109f).
 2. The millennialists assert that ancient Israel never received possession of the land God had promised them. But this claim clearly denies the plain declarations of the Scriptures:
 - a. Joshua 21:43: "And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein."
 - b. Joshua 23:14: "And, behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed

- thereof." This was stated as an accomplished fact about fourteen hundred years before the coming of Christ.
- c. Nehemiah 9:7-8: "Thou *art* the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it, I say*, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou *art* righteous." This was stated as an accomplished fact about five hundred years before the coming of Christ. Israel had possessed the land for hundreds of years before losing it after the Babylonian invasion; here, during the time of Nehemiah, they had been restored to that land.
3. The promise of the land of Canaan was conditioned on their faithfulness. The warnings issued to them showed that they would forfeit their claim to the land if they rebelled against God.
 - a. Deuteronomy 8:19-20: "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God."
 - b. Joshua 23:13-16: "Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. And, behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you."
 - c. See also Deuteronomy 29-30 and Jeremiah 18-19.
 4. Since the giving of the New Covenant, there is no "holy land" where one may worship God more acceptably than some other place.
 - a. John 4:23-24: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."
 - b. Acts 7:48-50: "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what *is* the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"
 - c. Acts 17:24-28: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things....That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."
 5. In order to restore the Old Testament temple, it would be necessary for God to repudiate these great truths; but there is no evidence in the Bible that he will again make that tract of terrestrial terrain a holy land, more blessed and sacred than any other place on earth. Therefore, we have no reason to
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think the temple, with its Holy Place and Most Holy Place, will ever be used on earth again.

E. The tribal identities of the Israelites must be re-established and proved.

1. The Messiah was to spring from the kingly tribe of Judah, through the family of David, which was the very tribe of which Jesus was a member.
 - a. Genesis 49:10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*."
 - b. Hebrews 7:14: "For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."
 - c. Acts 2:29-30: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne."
2. After the Roman invasion of Palestine in 70 A.D., the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was utterly devastated, and the vast genealogical tables were forevermore obliterated. So complete was the destruction of these genealogical records, that no Jew today has any way to determine his tribal identity. The surviving Jews from the various tribes have been so mingled that it would be impossible for any pure lineage ever to be established again, even by miraculous act. The destruction of the tables of genealogy shows that God did not intend ever to restore an earthly kingdom.
3. The significance of this is devastating to the millennial theory. There is no way for tribal identities to be determined so as to parcel out the land; and there is no way for the Messiah to prove his tribal identity. The millennialist might argue that the Messiah could supernaturally re-create the genealogical records, but he did not depend on miraculous action to prove that he was of the tribe of Judah during his first advent; there was no need, since the records were there to be checked.
4. The physical relationship to Abraham has absolutely no bearing on anyone's standing with God anymore.
 - a. Matthew 3:9: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."
 - b. Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God."
 - c. Galatians 3:28-29: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
 - d. Galatians 6:16: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The *Israel of God* now is the Lord's church.

F. The very things which Jesus nailed to his cross must be restored, if the millennial theory is true.

1. Why then did he die? It is certain that he died for entirely good purposes, including the aim of replacing the Mosaic system with a completely different and better system, the New Covenant.
 2. Matthew 5:17-18: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."
 3. Ephesians 2:14-15: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace."
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4. Colossians 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."
5. Galatians 2:21: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."
6. Hebrews 10:9: "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

IV. CONCLUSION.

A. The Parable of the Pounds illustrates the successful mission of Christ.

1. Luke 19:11-27: "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me."
 2. Christ came to earth for the purpose of saving the lost (Luke 19:10; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). In accomplishing this great mission, he established the kingdom, which he also called the church. The kingdom was always intended to be spiritual in nature. Those Jews who thought it was to be a literal, earthly kingdom were just as mistaken about that as are their modern-day counterparts who look for a worldly kingdom to be established by Christ on earth.
 - a. Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."
 - c. Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
 - d. 1 Timothy 1:15: "This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."
 3. The parable of the pounds shows that Christ was to return to heaven, at which time he would receive
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- the kingdom. At some future, unspecified date, he would return.
- a. The nobleman is Christ.
 - b. The journey into a far country is Christ's return to heaven.
 - c. The kingdom he received is his spiritual kingdom, the church.
 - d. The people who rejected him are the unbelieving Jews (vs. 14; cf. John 19:15,21).
 - e. The ten servants are followers of Christ.
 - f. The command for the servants to use the pounds properly is his command for them to be faithful.
 - g. The ten pounds represents the duties and opportunities he gives his servants.
 - h. The one who gained ten pounds is a faithful Christian; the one who gained five pounds is a faithful Christian of less ability and opportunity; the servant who was given one pound, which he did not use, is an unfaithful Christian.
 - i. The ten cities and five cities represent rewards in heaven, perhaps corresponding to the individual's fitness for, and ability to enjoy, the blessing given.
 - j. The loss of the one pound by the unfaithful servant represents punishment.
 - k. The slaying of the enemies represents the punishment of those who reject him.
 - l. The absence of the nobleman is the time between Christ's ascension and Second Coming.
 - m. The return of the nobleman is the Second Coming of Christ.
4. At the Lord's second coming:
- a. He will raise the dead.
 - 1) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:16: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."
 - b. He will change those who are alive on earth instantly into immortal bodies.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:51-53: "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality."
 - 2) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
 - 3) 1 Thessalonians 4:17: "Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
 - 4) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
 - c. The righteous will meet the Lord in the air: "Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the
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Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17).

- d. All who have ever lived on earth will be assembled before his Judgment Seat (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10-12; Rev. 20:11-15), at which time the eternal destinies of all mankind will be assigned officially.
 - 1) Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."
 - 2) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - 4) Revelation 20:11-15: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

B. The Second Coming will end all earthly affairs, not begin a new earthly episode.

1. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:10-13).
 - a. "New heavens and new earth" is a figurative description of the eternal realm of heaven. The passage plainly declares that the earth and all things associated with it will be utterly destroyed at the Lord's coming. There is no room in the apostle's statement to permit a reconstructed earth.
 - b. The reward of the righteous is in heaven: Christ went into heaven to prepare a place for his people there.
 - 1) Matthew 5:12: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
 - 2) Luke 6:23: "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets."
 - 3) John 14:1-4: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye

know."

- 4) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
 - c. The word *new* which Peter used is from *kainos*, which means new in quality, not necessarily new in age. The idea in the word is that the place described had not been used. The Greek word *neos* means new in respect to age. The tomb in which the Lord's body was buried is called "kainos," meaning that it had never been used (Matt. 27:60). The statement does not tell us that it had been freshly hewn out. Had this been the meaning of "new," the Holy Spirit would have used "neos."
 - d. Peter uses the expression to depict the fresh, unused place to which the redeemed will be taken in eternity. We ought not think of this old sin-scarred, corrupted earth with its abundant unpleasant and repugnant memories, to be the eternal home of our immortal spirits. Another earth, or this old earth renewed, would be no improvement on the original. But the place of eternal glory is heaven, constructed and prepared for those who are holy, who have faithfully endured, and who love God with all their hearts, minds, souls and strength, and their neighbor as themselves. We will have no use for this old earth. But in heaven, there are "many mansions" (John 14:1 ff), which are awaiting the coming of the righteous.
2. I Corinthians 15:23-28: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."
- C. We must reject and denounce the theories of men which deny the truth of God's Word.
1. The salvation of our souls depends on our believing and obeying the truth.
 - a. John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - b. John 17:17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
 - c. Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
 - d. 2 John 1:9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
 2. We must seek to teach those in error "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).
 3. God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14).
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