

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

Mike Glover

INTRODUCTION

The book of Ezekiel is sadly neglected by many Christians who think it is a hard book to understand. That is not the case. Difficult parts there may be, but it's never a difficult book. The message is very singular, and the method of portrayal is very interesting and exciting.

Sadly, many have used it as a happy hunting ground for the weirdest of doctrines and ideas, from Erich Von Daniken to Hal Lindsay. But Ezekiel was meant neither for 'space gods' nor premillennial teaching. It was, as Paul said written for our instruction. This study is not meant to deny false teaching, but to understand the book.

Although mention will be made on the way through of certain millennial ideas. In accordance with most commentators on the subject, I agree that a good knowledge of the Book of Jeremiah is of great benefit to the student of Ezekiel. Let 20th century Christians learn from both Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

Unlike many other books of the prophets, the book of Ezekiel has never been seriously questioned as to its authenticity or authorship. It plays an important part in God's revelation to Israel and shows clearly once again that God can use the individual characteristics of people to serve His purpose.

The Book of Ezekiel is generally ignored. It is probably not even read by most Christians. This is possibly due to the supposed problems with the first chapter, but we must not let the details of the vision in Ezekiel 1 put us off reading this great book.

WHAT IS A PROPHET?

1. Nabhi (Hebrew) is used 400 times in the Old Testament.
 - a. To bubble up or bubble forth.
 - b. A spokesman on behalf of another, to call or called.
 - c. Used of Abraham in Genesis 20:7.
 - d. Used to refer to a class or group of people until Moses. Deuteronomy 18:15ff and Deuteronomy 34:10.
2. Roch.
3. Chozeh.
 - a. Roch and Chozeh are translated 'seer' in the Old Testament. They emphasize the function of the Nabhi. Greek – Prophetes.
 - b. Definition: One who sees things that do not lie in the domain of natural sight, or who hears things which human ears do not ordinarily receive.
 - c. Thayer: 'To speak forth or to speak out, hence an interpreter or spokesman for God. One through whom God speaks. One who speaks forth by divine inspiration.'
 - d. Vines: 'A proclaimer of a divine message, denoted among the Greeks as an interpreter of the oracles of God. Hence in general the prophet was one upon whom the Spirit of God rested. Numbers 11:17-29. One to whom and through whom God speaks. Numbers 12:2 / Amos 3:7-8'.
 - e. Bullinger: Two things which together make a prophet.

1. An insight granted by God into the divine secrets or mysteries.
 2. A communication of these (divine secrets) to others, which from the very nature of the case are his purposes of grace with the warnings and announcements of judgement that pertain thereto.
- f. Bible definition: Exodus 4:16, Aaron, the spokesman of Moses, but in general a spokesman of God, a mouthpiece. Exodus 7:1, a prophet.

THE TASK OF A PROPHET

1. They were conscious of a divine call and a privilege of access to the inner council of Jehovah. God communicated to them and backed them with authority during emergencies.
 - a. God communicated his secret things to them. Amos 3:7.
 - b. Communicated at sundry times and in diverse manners. Hebrews 1:1.
 - c. Communicated by angels. Daniel 8:15-26 / Revelation 22:8-9.
 - d. Communicated by an audible voice. Numbers 12:8 / 1 Samuel 3:4ff.
 - e. Communicated by dreams and visions. Numbers 12:6 / Joel 2:28.
 - f. They were under the influence of the Holy Spirit while prophesying. Luke 1:67 / 2 Peter 1:21.
 - g. They spoke in the name of the Lord. Ezekiel 3:11 / 2 Chronicles 33:18.
 - h. They frequently spoke in parables and riddles. Ezekiel 17:2ff.
 - i. Frequently their actions were signs to the people. Ezekiel 4:1ff / Ezekiel 5:1-4 / Ezekiel 7:23 / Ezekiel 12:3-7 / Ezekiel 21:6-7 / Ezekiel 24:1ff.
2. They were uncompromising individuals.
3. They were clean, consecrated in life, lives were exemplary.
4. They were God's agents in revealing the future.

EZEKIEL, THE MAN

1. The name, Ezekiel is found nowhere else in the scriptures except in the book itself. Ezekiel 1:3 / Ezekiel 24:24.
2. Ezekiel means 'God will strengthen' or 'God strengthens'. God tells him that the people will not listen to him. But God will strengthen him. He will need it because of Ezekiel 2:5, His wife dies.
 - a. He was a married man, but his wife died when he was about 36 years old. Ezekiel 24:15ff. This event played a large part in his message.
 - b. He was of a priestly family and destined to become a priest serving in the temple in Jerusalem. Ezekiel 1:3 / Ezekiel 13:21. However, God changed the direction of his life and although called to be a priest, he was to serve God as a prophet. We must be ready for God to change the direction of our lives.
3. He was 30 years old when he was called to the prophetic office. Ezekiel 1:1. He was married and lived in his own house. Ezekiel 8:1 / Ezekiel 24:18.
 - a. If we understand Ezekiel 1:1, 30th year, as Ezekiel's age, then he would have been 25 when taken captive in 597B.C. to Babylon. 2 Kings 24:14 / Jeremiah 24. He would be preparing for that time when he would serve in the temple, but he would never see his homeland again in the flesh.

4. Ezekiel would have been one of the ‘cream of the crop’, the best that can be offered. 2 Kings 24:14ff / Jeremiah 29:1ff.

3 deportations. Daniel was in the first. Ezekiel was in the second deportation. 597 B.C. into exile.

5. Ezekiel was one of three prophets in the captivity, Jeremiah and Daniel being the other two, also some minor prophets like Zechariah and Haggai. Ezekiel refers to Daniel in Ezekiel 14:14 / Ezekiel 14:20 / Ezekiel 28:3.

HIS CONTEMPORARIES

1. Jeremiah a. Jeremiah worked in Jerusalem. He was much older than Ezekiel, by some 20 years. Jeremiah had begun his work in the days of King Josiah in 627 B.C. Jeremiah 1:2ff. Josiah died in 609 BC.

b. It is possible that Ezekiel and Jeremiah knew each other, as they were both connected with priests.

2. Daniel a. Daniel was taken into captivity in 606 B.C. 9 years before Ezekiel. He had already made a name for himself in the Babylonian court. Ezekiel 14:14 / Ezekiel 14:20 / Ezekiel 28:3.

3. Ezekiel

a. Was meticulous/careful/accurate in dating his prophecies. Ezekiel 29:17, date 575 B.C. last dated prophecy which indicates that he was about 22/23 years in the business of prophecy.

b. Ezekiel was a vivid character. He carried a harsh message to his people and was often unable to give it because he identified so much with them.

At the same time, he was a bit of an extrovert and used allegory, figures and symbolic actions and language to enhance his message. Ezekiel 4:1-8.

c. ‘It would appear that there runs through all the prophet’s activities, at least in the earlier period, a strain of mental abnormality, perhaps of actual malady.’ W.F. Lofthouse. ‘The Book of Ezekiel’ (The Century Bible) p.7

‘He loved the symbol, not for itself alone, but for the majesty which it contained, the hidden light which it guarded. It is in this region alone that he seems to wear an absorbed and pontifical air, not with the false sacerdotal desire to enhance personal impressiveness and private dignity, through the ministry of divine powers and holy secrets, but with the unconscious emotion of one whose eyes behold great wonders enacting themselves upon the bodiless air, which the dull and contentious may not discern.’ W.F. Lofthouse ‘The Book of Ezekiel’ p.11 quoting A.C. Benson.

THE BOOK AND ITS MESSAGE

1. Ezekiel uses the bifid method in constructing his narrative. (taking 2 major parts with a cleft in the middle.)

The approaching fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 1-24 (major part) Prophecies concerning foreign nations. Ezekiel 25-32 (cleft side issue) Israel’s future restoration. Ezekiel 33-48 (major part)

2. It was Ezekiel’s responsibility to remind Israel of the sins which had brought judgement and exile upon them. At the same time, he encourages and strengthens their faith with prophecies of future restoration and glory.

3. Ezekiel vindicates God’s judgements throughout. Ezekiel 14:23 / Ezekiel 18:5-20 / Ezekiel 33:10-20.

4. The prophet is called to be a watchman to the house of Israel. Ezekiel 3:17 / Ezekiel 33:7. He is to give a warning to the wicked men and his persistence in it.

5. The only way that this can be achieved is by listening to God and his spokesman and not to the false prophets. Consequently, Ezekiel uses the expression ‘Thus saith the Lord’ at least 117 times in the book.
6. To get across his message he used several ecstatic and dramatic acts. Ezekiel 3:25-26 / Ezekiel 4:1-15 / Ezekiel 5:1-4 / Ezekiel 12:3-7 / Ezekiel 12:17 Ezekiel 24:3-5 / Ezekiel 24:15-18 / Ezekiel 37:15-17.

THREE MAJOR LESSONS

1. The relationship of the individual responsibility to corporate guilt. (the whole nation.)
2. Amid this harsh judgement of God, his loving arms are ever outstretched.
3. Its result: Society can be reconstituted.
 - a. The book of Ezekiel is a collection of the events in the prophet’s life, and of his words of prophecy to the exiles in Babylon, delivered to the exiles in Babylon.
 - b. Ezekiel’s prophecy is directed in three ways:
 1. Ezekiel speaks to the exiles in Babylon. Ezekiel 11-25 about their attitudes and actions.
 2. Ezekiel speaks to the people of Judea. If I was there, this is what I would say.
 3. Ezekiel speaks to the exiles about the people in Judea. What they are saying and thinking.
 - c. In all of this, he never, literally left the area of Babylon. Ezekiel, once taken captive, never returned to Jerusalem in the flesh. His work was primarily for the exiles in Babylon; Jeremiah was working with the people in Jerusalem.
 - d. The people’s response to Ezekiel’s message caused the prophet problems. Their response to his message and the events going on around them stimulated part of the message of this book. Their general response was disbelief and undue optimism. They placed their trust in promises of the past, although they did not properly understand them. They refused to believe that Jerusalem would be destroyed. BECAUSE:
 1. The land promise. Genesis 17:8ff.
 2. God’s name had been placed in the Temple forever. 2 Chronicles 7:16.
 3. God’s covenant with David and Solomon. Psalms 89 / 2 Chronicles 7:18.
 - e. The problem was, that the people missed the punitive IF clauses in these promises and covenants. 2 Chronicles 7:19 / Psalms 89:30ff / Genesis 17:9ff.
 - e. The message Ezekiel and Jeremiah were trying to get across was that there was to be a total, national captivity, and their city and temple would be destroyed. Ezekiel 1-24 deals with this point.
 - f. Another problem was Idolatry against which Isaiah warned them. Isaiah 48:8-11. Foreign nations who might question and doubt the reality of Jehovah because of Judah’s destruction, are clearly told that they too will be judged by God. Ezekiel 25-32 deals with that.
 - g. We then reach historically, the destruction of the city. Ezekiel 33. The judgements having taken place, Ezekiel’s message then changes to one of hope and promise for the future. Ezekiel 34-48.

THEMES

- a. One of the major themes running through the book is the sovereignty of God. In over 60 places we find the phrase, ‘They shall know that I am the Lord.’ It occurs in 27 of the 48 chapters. [Ezekiel 6:7](#) / [Ezekiel 13:9](#) / [Ezekiel 33:29](#).
- b. Another theme is that of the holiness of God, shown in that he cannot dwell in a temple which is the centre of false worship. [Ezekiel 8:6](#) / [Ezekiel 43:10](#). God will demand holiness of the people when he promises them a future.
- c. Ezekiel compiles the book almost as a journal or diary. Throughout, it is carefully dated and arranged in basically chronological order. [Ezekiel 1:1-2](#) / [Ezekiel 8:1](#) / [Ezekiel 20:1](#) / [Ezekiel 24:1](#) / [Ezekiel 35:21](#).
- d. Why does Ezekiel date his book so precisely?

It may be partly due to his own personality, but undoubtedly when a date is normally given in a book of the prophets, it usually speaks of a need to understand the historical background. Generally speaking, the prophets cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of the history of the times.

EZEKIEL AND JOHN

- a. There are many similarities and connections between the books of Ezekiel and Revelation.

COMPARE

Cherubim, [Ezekiel 1](#) and [Ezekiel 10:15](#) with [Revelation 4:6ff](#).

Protect God’s Holiness. Gog and Magog, [Ezekiel 38](#) with [Revelation 20:7ff](#).

Enemy of God’s people Eating a book, [Ezekiel 3](#) with [Revelation 10:1ff](#).

Make my message yours Written on the heart. New Jerusalem, [Ezekiel 40-48](#) with [Revelation 21](#).

River of water of life, [Ezekiel 47](#) with [Revelation 22](#).

Blessing of God overflowing to his people.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- a. The Biblical history of the period of Ezekiel’s life is found in [2 Kings 21-25](#) / [2 Chronicles 33-36](#) / [Jeremiah 21-45](#). Ezekiel was born during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah in about 622 B.C. But we need to go further back to the reign of Manasseh to understand the full background.
- b. Internationally, there was a power struggle going on between the failing Assyrians who had been world rulers for some time, the Egyptians who would have been happy to continue an alliance with them, and the Chaldeans led by Nabopolassar who eventually came out on top. (Dates according to Thiele.)

1. Manasseh. 686-642 BC

- a. The reign of this king was one of the blackest periods in Judah’s history. Manasseh was almost totally in the hands of the kings of Assyria throughout his reign.

- b. He had a tremendous zeal for every kind of idolatry that could be found, even filling the Temple with idols from all over. The worst of these was the god 'Molech' to whom they sacrificed live children to be burnt in the 'hands' of the image.
- c. Any opposition was quickly quenched until it was said of him, 'he shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.' 2 Kings 21:16 / 2 Kings 24:4.
- d. During his reign, God pronounced that He had had enough. Judah would go into exile for 70 years because of their conduct. 2 Kings 21:10-15. This was despite a turnabout by Manasseh. He was taken captive by the Assyrians, and after his return, Manasseh repented.
- e. His turn about was not, however, enough to affect most of the people. This is clearly seen in his own son Amon, who had been influenced into idolatry too far to change him.

2. Amon. 642-640 BC

- a. Amon's reign was insignificant. Simply an extension of his father's evil reign. He was assassinated in a very short time. Ezekiel 21:19.

3. Josiah. 640-609 BC.

- a. Josiah came to the throne when he was 8 years old. He was a good king, one of the best ever in Judah. His reforms were extensive, beginning when he was only 20, in purging idolatry and in promoting true worship of God. He made extensive repairs to the temple, and whilst that was being done, a 'Book of the law' was found.
- b. This was probably part or most of the book of Deuteronomy. This increased Josiah's zeal, when the book was read to him, he went on a campaign, purging idolatry wherever he found it. 2 Kings 23:4-14.
- c. There is little doubt that his reforms were encouraged by Zephaniah and the young Jeremiah.
- d. Josiah's 31 good years ended when he foolishly faced the Egyptians led by Pharaoh Neco. Neco had no argument with Judah but was forced to fight with them by Josiah. Josiah was fatally wounded and returned to Jerusalem and died in 609 B.C.
- e. The death of Josiah marked the end of obedience to the will of God, and it marked the end of Judah's independence. Apart from a short period (142-61 B.C.), Judah was always ruled or occupied by someone.
- f. However, Josiah's zealous purge was not enough to undo all the evil done by previous kings, the Lord had already passed judgement on Judah. 2 Kings 23:25-27. Josiah's reform was 'too little, too late'. (McGuiggan)
- g. Ezekiel was now 13 and would have been influenced by the great reforming king, and the emerging prophet Jeremiah.

5. Jehoahaz. 609 BC.

- a. He was the son of Josiah, and reigned for 3 months. On his way back to Egypt, Neco took Jehoahaz captive, put his elder brother Jehoiakim on the throne and made Judah an Egyptian vassal state/tributary.

6. Jehoiakim. 609-598 BC.

- a. The 11 years of his reign proved him to be a strong character but a wicked man. Now it was evident how superficial the reforms of Josiah had been. Back came the idolatry, false prophets, corruption, etc. that had been rife in the days before Josiah.
- b. Many who opposed this retrograde step were murdered, and Jeremiah himself only narrowly escaped being put to death. Jeremiah 26:10-19.

- c. In 605 B.C. the Babylonians showed their supremacy by defeating the Egyptians at Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar accepted Judah as a vassal state and took some of the people back to Babylon with him (amongst whom were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azeriah). Daniel 1:3-6.
- d. Jehoiakim was not a good ruler. He built himself a luxurious house to show off his ‘greatness’. Jeremiah 22:13ff.
- e. A short rebellion was soon dealt with by Nebuchadnezzar in 598/7 B.C. when he besieged Jerusalem. During the siege, Jehoiakim met his death.
7. Jehoiachin 598-597 B.C. (3 months).
- a. Another 3-month reign. He took the throne during the siege but was taken captive to Babylon when the city fell. This time, not a few, but thousands of the people were taken captive to Babylon. 2 Kings 24:14-16. Amongst this group was Ezekiel.
8. Zedekiah. 597-586 B.C.
- a. He was the uncle of Jehoiachin, brother to Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim. His 11 years proved his weakness of character. The remaining rulers in Jerusalem at this time were divided between a pro-Babylonian party and a pro-Egyptian party. Jeremiah and the prophets preached submission to the Babylonians, but Zedekiah was not strong-willed enough to stop the rebellion against Babylon, nor an alliance with Egypt.
- b. Even though it is possible that he knew the right way to go. Jeremiah 36. Late in 589 B.C., the Babylonians besieged the city and by July 586 B.C. Jerusalem fell.
- c. Zedekiah and his family tried to flee but were caught; his sons were killed before his eyes, and then he was blinded and taken captive to Babylon. The other rebellious leaders were also killed. The city was burned, the walls broken were down, the temple treasures were taken by Babylon and the temple itself was destroyed.
9. The Aftermath.
- a. Gedaliah was appointed governor of what was left but was too soon murdered by a small resistance movement among the Jews. They fled to Egypt taking the ailing Jeremiah with them.

OUTLINE

- The prophet’s call and commission. Ezekiel 1:1-3:15
- Prophecies from Ezekiel’s call until the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 3:16-24:17
- Predictions against and lamentations over foreign nations. Ezekiel 25-32
- The Responsibilities of a watchman and a shepherd. Ezekiel 33-34
- Edom is denounced. Ezekiel 35
- The valley of dry bones. Ezekiel 36-37
- Gog and Magog are judged. Ezekiel 38-39
- The vision of a restored temple. Ezekiel 40-48

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chronologically Ezekiel begins about the same year 592 B.C. as Jeremiah is dealing with in [Jeremiah 34:21-22](#). The call and consecration of Ezekiel to the office of prophet [Ezekiel 1:1](#) to [Ezekiel 3:21](#).

THE APPEARANCE OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD. EZEKIEL 1

1. Time and place of appearance. [Ezekiel 1:1-3](#).
2. The theophany and vision of the four cherubim. [Ezekiel 1:4-14](#).
3. The four wheels beside the cherubim. [Ezekiel 1:15-21](#).
4. The throne and glory of Yahweh. [Ezekiel 1:22-28](#).

GOD'S HAND ON EZEKIEL. 592 BC

‘In my thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. On the fifth of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin—the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. There the hand of the LORD was on him.’ [Ezekiel 1:1-3](#)

We learn where Ezekiel is, and his circumstances. Ezekiel describes his vision. The prophet introduces himself as the son of Buzi. He gives us his location by the banks of the river Chebar. [Ezekiel 3:12-15](#) further tells us that he lived at Telabib, by the river Chebar.

This has been linked with the main irrigation canal built by Nebuchadnezzar close to Babylon. Telabib ‘mound of the flood,’ [Ezekiel 3:15](#), a Jewish settlement, was in the immediate vicinity of the canal.

He lived among the exiles. ‘30th year’ cannot be conclusively stated what this refers to, but it is most likely to be the age of the prophet. The events of the flood were dated by the age of Noah. [Genesis 7:6](#) / [Genesis 7:11](#) / [Genesis 8:13](#). There is reason to believe that 30 was the age when the priest took on his proper functions. This is based on the commands given to the Levites. [Numbers 4:3](#) / [Numbers 4:23](#) / [Numbers 4:30](#) / [Numbers 4:39](#) / [1 Chronicles 23:3](#). Jewish writings do not confirm this. Some use the fact that Jesus began his work at the age of 30 as added proof, but that proves nothing concerning Ezekiel.

That being the case, Ezekiel trains to be a priest. God at the very time when he is ready to take up his duties, tells him he has some other work for him to do.

We may plan what we wish to do for God with our lives, but we must always be prepared for him to have other plans. If the 30th year of the 4th month on the 5th day refers to his age, He was taken into captivity in 597 B.C. and began preaching 5 years after, then his birth date must be approx. 622 B.C.

In this book, we find the story of Ezekiel’s life and the prophecies he brought to the people. No other book in the Old Testament has the life of the prophet and the role of the prophet of God been so entwined except perhaps Hosea. The vision is a vision of the glory of God, but it is the glory of God as manifested in his coming in just judgement!

Here at the height of summer, he begins to date his writing by the exile of King Jehoiachin who was considered to be the rightful king by God and the Babylonians, they did not kill him but treated him with respect. 1st July 592 B.C. 4th Month if dated by Babylon calendar Duzu, in Hebrew Tammuz, [2 Chronicles 36:10](#) / [2 Kings 25:27-30](#).

We read, 'The word of Jehovah came.' No apologies for the affirmation. No hesitancy or embarrassment. No begging leave to say such a thing. Ezekiel said, 'God spoke to me!'

The message Ezekiel brings brought him no ease or popularity. It was contrary to his wishes and, therefore, not a daydream.

There is no indication of morbidity in the book, so he cannot be accused of suffering from melancholia. The book is a perfect balance of realism and optimism.

No, the only way to successfully assail the affirmation of verse 3 is to prove there is no God, or God cannot speak, or God could not speak to Ezekiel. Unless one of these is established, there can be no successful negative! GOD SPOKE TO EZEKIEL.

THE PRIEST

'The hand of the Lord was upon him' shows Ezekiel's contact with God. [Ezekiel 3:14](#) / [Ezekiel 3:22](#) / [Ezekiel 8:1](#) / [Ezekiel 33:22](#) / [Ezekiel 37:1](#) / [Ezekiel 40:1](#).

Before moving on it is worth stating at the beginning that the meaning of much of what the prophets say is lost by looking at the details of their words rather than the overall picture.

Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory of God coming in judgement, that is the overall picture in [Ezekiel 1](#). Understand that, and you understand the first chapter. Now obviously, it will help to look at some detail as well.

Every prophet before starting his work as a prophet was given a vision of God, [1 Samuel 9:9](#). The prophets had a vision of God. [Numbers 12:6](#).

The prophets saw they did nothing without the motivation of God. The message of the true prophet was never self-motivated. [Isaiah 6:1ff](#) / [Obadiah 1](#).

Now if the vision they receive is of or from God, who has the right to interpret it?

The giver of that vision or dream. Hence, only God can properly interpret the vision given to each prophet. [Daniel 2:17ff](#) / [2 Peter 1:20ff](#).

Jacob saw God at Peniel and his life was transformed from that hour. Moses went up to Mount Sinai and communed with God face to face and thereafter was marked for the rest of his life.

Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord in the sanctuary and his entire ministry was suffused with the beauty of the holiness of the Lord. Paul saw the risen and glorified Redeemer on the Damascus road and was blinded from that day on to all the allurements of the world.

John saw visions of the glorious unfolding of God's program for Christ, the church and all the redeemed, and as a result, was unmoved by the adverse circumstances that surrounded him.

Ezekiel saw visions of the glory of the Lord God of Israel and his ministry never lost the impression of it. Such is the importance of Ezekiel's life and ministry in [Ezekiel 1](#) of the book of Ezekiel. The vision in [Ezekiel 1](#) is referred to again in [Ezekiel 10](#) and [Ezekiel 11](#).

In this inaugural vision, the prophet is seeking to picture something which far surpasses the power of any human language to express.

His picturesque representation can be compared with Isaiah's vision, [Isaiah 6](#), because it expresses the absolute sovereignty of God. Among the attributes of God emphasized in the vision are His omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence.

The call of Ezekiel can be compared with that of Moses, [Exodus 3](#), Amos, [Amos 7:15](#), Isaiah, [Isaiah 6](#), and Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 1:4-10](#). All had an encounter with God. So, did Paul in the New Testament record.

Not all the prophets record their vision or dream, Ezekiel tries. In his attempt to try and put into words what was before him, Ezekiel is lost for words. In a desperate attempt to explain the vision of a spiritual nature, he uses terms that do not fully explain themselves.

Just read through [Ezekiel 1](#), before we get into the text and notice his use of vague descriptive phrases.

Phrase	Amount of Times it occurs
"As it were"	1
"The likeness of"	1
"The form of"	1
"like"	10
"likened like"	1
"The appearance of"	1
"a likeness"	1

28 times in 28 verses

You begin to get the impression that the prophet is having a hard time putting into words what he saw.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VISION

There was an electric storm. There were 4 living creatures. Later identified as cherubim. [Ezekiel 9:3](#) / [Ezekiel 10:1](#). They have an overall human shape.

They have 4 faces each, man, lion, ox (bull), and eagle. They have 4 wings, 1 pair folded, 4 hands, straight legs and feet like calves. There were 4 wheels below them, with eyes in the rims of the wheels.

Two wings touch other cherubim, and 2 cover their own body, this creates a square. Above the 4 creatures is a space. Raqa is same word used in [Genesis 1:5](#), firmament. Above the space is the throne of God.

There was a fire in the midst of them. There was life in the wheels. There was one on the throne with a rainbow. Four creatures had perfect coordination and harmony, were faster than light, and could move in any direction.

Seated on the throne was a human form. As this was a vision of the Glory of God, it must be God sitting on the throne, like fire brightness, and blinding light.

The glory of the Lord was not Babylon or Nebuchadnezzar whom Ezekiel saw coming in judgement, but Jehovah. Notice whose chariot this is. What was going to happen was not because of the whim of an elderly despot, but by the will of God. [Isaiah 10:5ff](#).

Ezekiel's vision was from God and about God, the God of Israel was fulfilling what he had already promised. To warn the people by a prophet. Deuteronomy 18:18ff / Amos 3:7 / Genesis 6:13. Glory, kabod, weight, heaviness, honour.

There are nine different Hebrew words for Glory and they appear, 155 times in the Old Testament and wherever you see the words, the Glory of Jehovah or Glory of the Lord it is the word Kabod, it appears 19 times in the book of Ezekiel, 12 times in the first 11 chapters, then a gap to Ezekiel 43:2.

It is the Glory that reveals God's presence with his people and proclaims his holiness. The glory appeared on Mount Sinai to Moses and the People. It filled the Tabernacle, once it had been erected so that even Moses could not enter it.

Why the gap? Is it because the sight of the Glory of God does something to man?

The glory of God first in Ezekiel 1, when Ezekiel was called like Isaiah and John. He sees it again in Ezekiel 3:23.

In Ezekiel 8:4, like the vision that I saw in the plain. In Ezekiel 10:15-16 / Ezekiel 11:22 and never again until Ezekiel 43:2.

What is important to notice, is 'the Glory has departed both Temple and city' Ezekiel 3:4. God speak to the people, by the river Ezekiel 3:22 go to the plain, Ezekiel 3:23 the same Glory.

Then down to Ezekiel 8, we see Ezekiel being miraculously transported from his house in Babylon, where he is speaking to the elders, carried off to Jerusalem.

In his vision, he finds himself in a vision of God. So that Ezekiel could see how the people were defiled. And so, we see that the Glory leaves the Temple.

Exodus 25:22, there I will meet between the two Cherubim, so in Ezekiel 9:3, the Glory is at the entrance of the

Temple sanctuary. In Ezekiel 10:3, the Glory goes forth and stands over the cherubim in readiness for leaving.

In Ezekiel 11:22-23, they mount into the air with the Glory of the Lord above them and move to the mountain to the East of the city, the mount of olives, higher than Jerusalem and giving a tremendous view over the city.

God had left Jerusalem, as Jesus said your house has left you desolate, Ezekiel's vision closes here he tells the Exiles what he has seen.

The significance is that God's Glory no longer dwells in Jerusalem, nor does his protection, the Babylonians can destroy at will. When does the Glory return?

Ezekiel 43:2-6, the Glory returns from the direction from which it had gone, The Glory Fills the Temple once more.

The last words, 'the Lord is there'!

Let's get back to the text, 'the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.' This phrase also occurs in Ezekiel

3:22 / Ezekiel 8:1 / Ezekiel 33:22 / Ezekiel 37:1 / Ezekiel 40:1.

This refers to Ezekiel's experience of the vision. God's hand is firm and compelling on him. He could feel the pressure and responsibility on him.

'I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The centre of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire, was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four of them had faces and wings, and the wings of one touched the wings of another.

Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved.' Ezekiel 1:4-9

Ezekiel saw a great storm cloud coming towards him from the north. As it drew nearer he saw that it was the chariot throne of Jehovah borne by four cherubim. It is a basic Old Testament concept that the sovereignty of God is revealed both in His control of nature and of history.

Ezekiel is to be the bearer of the message that the deportation of the exiles and the coming destruction of Jerusalem are God's acts, so he is first given a vision of the mighty thunderstorm as a mere attendant on God's throne. Picture the boiling, rolling activity of clouds as they enfold themselves within themselves during tornado type weather.

Picture too incessant lightning activity in the clouds and the rays of the sun bathing the heart of the clouds with a golden, glowing garment of light, and we have some idea of what Ezekiel saw coming toward him out of the north. Clouds and lightning are associated with judgement and destruction.

OUT OF THE NORTH

Why should the vision come out of the north? Because Israel's enemies normally came from the north, following the line of the 'fertile crescent'.

Or nearer at hand from Israel, Syria etc. All came from the north. The point being then, that enemies were coming to destroy them. God would use an enemy to destroy Judah as he had the northern kingdom. [Isaiah 10:5ff](#). Egypt was the exception, being a southerly enemy.

The glory of Jehovah dwelt in Jerusalem, [Ezekiel 8-11](#), and the vision of its forsaking of the Temple had not yet been given. Jerusalem lay almost due west, and there was no need for God to take a long way around by Carchemish that the captives had had to follow.

The desert was no obstacle to Him. One reason was doubtless to impress on the prophet to be that shame and ignominy, dishonour and disgrace, of the captives was not hidden from their God. He was willing to go the way that they had gone.

More important than this was the Babylonian belief that their gods lived in the far north, [Isaiah 14:13](#). If the chariot throne came from the north, it meant that whatever gods might live there had been vanquished on the way.

This is not to attribute to Ezekiel any real belief in these gods, but it was the sign that there was no power in heaven or on earth that could stop Jehovah in His triumphant way.

Much of the idolatry seen by Ezekiel in vision is at the north gate of the Temple. [Ezekiel 8:3](#) / [Ezekiel 8:5](#) / [Ezekiel 8:14](#). Perhaps Ezekiel is being shown that it is this idolatry which is causing the war chariot to come to Jerusalem. Coming in judgement.

LIVING CREATURES

The picture is of God's war chariot. The cherubim are the chariot of God, His battle wagon, His vehicle of righteous war! He sits enthroned on His chariot. They are expressly called 'the chariot' in [1 Chronicles 28:18](#) and [Psalm 18:10](#), as we hear of his riding upon a cherub. They protect his righteousness.

It is the cherubim who stand between the transgressors and the tree of life in [Genesis 3:24](#). We find them woven into the veil which separates between the holy place and the holy of holies in [Exodus 36:35](#), so that one could not enter into the presence of God without first passing them.

When this was done on that great day of atonement, it could only be accomplished at the expense of some innocent victim whose blood had to be shed. [1 Chronicles 28:18](#) / [Psalm 18:10](#) / [Exodus 37:1-6](#).

We find them on the top of the ark of the covenant in [Exodus 37:6ff](#) looking downward, gazing as it were at the law, the broken and mutilated law, contained in the box. [Exodus 25:18-25](#).

Were it not for the intervening mercy seat, a mercy seat upon which the blood of the innocent was poured, they would have demanded that righteous judgement be wrought on all the transgressors and that God's holiness be vindicated.

We find them in [Revelation 4:16ff](#), the closest beings to the One who there sits enthroned. The endless task is to declare his righteousness and unapproachableness of the King by perpetually saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy!'

We find them in [Ezekiel 9](#) and [Ezekiel 10](#) as they work the vengeance of God upon both the inhabitants of the city and the city itself.

Six of them come with 'slaughter weapons' in their hands, and beginning at the sanctuary, they slay everyone who does not sigh and cry for the abominations done in Jerusalem.

[Psalm 18:12ff](#) is echoed in [Ezekiel 10](#) when a seventh cherub casts living coals upon the city of Jerusalem thus bringing righteous judgement upon it.

In [Ezekiel 1](#), we find the cherubim clearly pictured as the chariot throne of Jehovah. They are God's executors of justice, the defenders of His holiness, His instrument of judgement upon the lawless! Cherubim, wherever found in Scripture, is related to the holiness of God.

They do not represent a likeness of God, which was forbidden by command. They are closely involved with the judgement in [Ezekiel 9-11](#), of the city and the people. The cherubim will in fact be directly involved in the figurative 'cleansing' of the city and people.

What is the significance of their appearance? We notice that the human form predominated amongst the four creatures. These are creatures, as opposed to the creator who sits above them.

This vision is designed to make Ezekiel aware of what his message is to be. What he now sees is what he is to tell the people. [Ezekiel 2](#) and [Ezekiel 3](#).

BURNISHED BRASS/BRONZE HOOFS

This speaks of destructive power. This is said of Judah. [Micah 4:13](#), of Jesus. [Revelation 1:15](#). In this picture of judgement, there is one small element of mercy, the rainbow. [Ezekiel 1:27-28](#). Many suggest that these are similar to the winged man/animals so often seen amongst the Assyrian/Babylonian buildings. They suggest that Ezekiel was influenced by these.

This is most unlikely. Here we have four creatures, each of which are the highest in their separate arenas. Man is supreme above all, the eagle and the lion are chief predators on land and air respectively, the ox or bull is the most powerful domestic animal.

Their wings serve to preserve decency by covering their bodies and serving as a protection for the throne section. Each cherubim had four wheels beside it, not attached to it, [Ezekiel 1:15](#).

[Ezekiel 1:5](#) / [Ezekiel 1:11](#) and [Ezekiel 1:23](#) pictures four beings each the general shape of a man but having four faces instead of simply front and back.

These beings stand in something of a square or a rectangle. They stretch two of their four wings toward each other thus forming an enclosed square. The other two wings cover their bodies.

The feet of burnished brass, copper, speak of power to destroy. The daughter of Zion is promised 'hoofs of brass' that she might arise and thresh her enemies, [Micah 4:13](#).

The origin of the symbol is not hard to find. The hoof was the usual instrument of threshing by trampling as we can see from [Deuteronomy 25:4](#).

‘Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. They each had two wings spreading out upward, each wing touching that of the creature on either side; and each had two other wings covering its body. Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning. Ezekiel 1:10-14

Nine times in [Ezekiel 1](#) the word ‘likeness’ is mentioned. We can only think of God by reasoning from what is highest in our thoughts of human greatness and goodness, entirely apart from their present limitations.

Ezekiel did not see God Himself, [John 1:18](#), but certain likeness and appearances conveyed to him the character and attributes of the majestic and sovereign God.

Reverent expositors find in the mention of a ‘man’ on the throne a strong hint of the great truth of the incarnation. He who is meant is the worthy Lord Jesus Christ.

If God is to be portrayed in concrete form, the highest symbol man can use is the human form. When God wanted to reveal Himself in the supreme revelation of His person, He did so in the form of the Man Christ Jesus.

The four faces represent creaturehood. The feet are described as straight feet because they were without a bend at the knee, they were ready for motion in any direction. The hands of a man speak of the power of manipulation and a certain deftness of touch.

The joining of the wings emphasizes the perfect unity of action on the part of the living creatures. Their faces are that of a man, speaking of intelligence; of a lion, standing for majesty and power, of an ox, displaying patient service, of an eagle, depicting swiftness in meting out judgement, and discernment from afar.

The rabbis said of the living creatures, ‘Man is exalted among creatures; the eagle is exalted among birds; the ox is exalted among domestic animals, the lion is exalted among wild beasts, and all of them have received dominion, and greatness has been given them, yet they are stationed below the chariot of the Holy One.’

The burning coals of fire point to the intensely pure and consuming justice of God that must punish sin. The fire travelled up and down, indicating the energy and vigour of God’s Spirit which is unwearied and un-resting, [Psalms 104:4](#) / [Hebrews 1:7](#).

This shows God’s purifying and consuming justice being executed Ezekiel did not see a spaceship but caught a glimpse of the glory of God coming in judgement. [Isaiah 6:5](#) / [Revelation 1:17](#) / [2 Corinthians 12:1-7](#).

‘As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around. When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked something like a vault, sparkling like crystal, and awesome.’ Ezekiel 1:15-22

Wheels, it has been suggested mean primarily and naturally the revolution of time. The wheels connect the chariot with the earth. Nothing is stationary in God’s universe, all is in motion and progressing.

Besides, close to, and under, Ezekiel 10:2, the cherubim are wheels, four of them for each creature. The wheels are within each other thus creating the appearance of rims. They are capable of going in any direction, something like the swivel wheels on grocery trolleys in a supermarket.

The rims are full of eyes which gives them a dreadful appearance. The chariot of God knows no limitation of territory. North, south, east or west makes no difference.

This was not true of the chariots of the nations for each knew his limitations and those who did not pay the price; but wherever transgression needed to be dealt with, there the cherubim would go. They could go in four directions, not simultaneously.

The cherubim determined when the wheels moved, however. As to the exact construction of the wheels within wheels, there are countless explanations. Notice that these creatures, the wheels, in fact, the whole chariot had a 'life' about it.

The wheels have eyes which give it a seeing ability. Ezekiel 10:12 suggests that there were in fact eyes everywhere. This chariot sees everything.

The rings or fellys are the circumferences of the wheels. The eyes are symbolic of divine omniscience in the workings of nature and history, Zechariah 3:9 / Zechariah 4:10 / Revelation 4:6 / 2 Chronicles 16:9 / Proverbs 15:3. The wheels stress movement. God is on the move. The whole chariot moved according to the will of Him on the throne, not indiscriminately, but 'straight' towards the prey, the people.

'Under the vault their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings.' Ezekiel 1:23-23

The cherubim went straightforward, conveying to us the truth that the principles of God's sovereignty go on without deviation. It is interesting that with their wings they covered themselves and flew. Worship is first and foremost, then service, Luke 10:38-42.

The noise of the wings of the cherubim when on their way to judge was deafening and awe-inspiring, like the thunder of the mighty waves beating on cliffs, like the noise of a huge host on the march, like the voice of the Almighty Himself which terrorised Israel and Moses in the days of Sinai.

'Then there came a voice from above the vault over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.' Ezekiel 1:25-28

In the midst of all the fire and lightning, noise and brightness, there is the rainbow, the one element speaking of mercy which softens the otherwise uniformity of its terror, the bow of promise which even today speaks of a merciful and covenant-keeping God.

The bow shows that the God of all majesty and power is also the God of promise and grace who is ever mindful of and faithful to His covenant regarding the earth. Ezekiel makes it clear that the vision concerns the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

The Talmud says there is the 'large face' of God and the 'small face,' and man can only see the latter. The effect of the vision on Ezekiel was the same as that on Daniel and John, Daniel 8:17 / Daniel 10:8-9 / Revelation 1:17 / Isaiah 6:5.

THE APPEARANCE OF GOD

The importance of the vision of this chapter can be seen by the threefold repetition, [Ezekiel 3:22ff](#) / [Ezekiel 8:4ff](#) / [Ezekiel 43:1ff](#).

Its significance was not only in the revelation that the temple and commonwealth of Israel in Jerusalem were to be summarily destroyed but in that God, was still in the midst of His people and would yet consummate His earthly kingdom in a future day in spite of the fact that God's people were then in exile.

The old temple was to be destroyed, but the new one was yet to be built. The repetition of the vision relates it to all his ministry whether in speaking of judgement or mercy, showing God's un-resting activity was controlling all in a spirit of holiness and justice.

After the Lord's self-revelation, Ezekiel will be charged to condemn Israel's sins and declare that judgement is soon to come.

No prophet was given so strange, so complicated, nor so significant a revelation at his call as was Ezekiel. He had doubtless read and meditated on the manifestations of God, [Exodus 19:16ff](#) / [Exodus 24:10](#) / [1 Kings 19:11](#) / [1 Kings 22:19](#) / [Nahum 1:3](#) / [Psalms 18:11](#) / [Psalm 50:3](#) / [1 Samuel 4:4](#) / [2 Samuel 6:2](#) / [2 Samuel 22:11](#) / [Isaiah 6:1](#).

In [Ezekiel 1](#) God has brought together in one vision the essence of all that was to occupy Ezekiel, just as is found in the initial vision of the Apostle John in Revelation.

When the average reader of the Scripture comes to a passage such as [Ezekiel 1](#), he sometimes may conceive that the matters under consideration are far removed from his life and service. But the opposite is true.

Just as Ezekiel was a faithful messenger for God, warning of judgement for the unbelieving, and assuring of blessing for the believing, so we today have the unparalleled privilege to call all men to the truth in Christ.

If we have ever had a view of the holiness and majesty of our God, how can we fail to herald His message of urgency to the lost! If we are faithful, He has promised to call forth a remnant from all peoples. May God grant this fulfilment to be realised in our lives.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

THE CALL OF EZEKIEL TO PROPHETIC OFFICE. EZEKIEL 2:1-3:3

1. The Spirit of the prophet and the people with whom he has to deal [Ezekiel 2:1-7](#).
2. Preparation for the task. [Ezekiel 2:8-3:3](#).

SUMMARY

Ezekiel is given his commission. Note the prophet's reaction to his commission. We learn the message is one of judgement on Judah. These two chapters must be taken together. Another example of where the chapter breaks are inconsistent with the flow of the book.

We find the prophet is told to whom he will be sent, and the type of people that he will be working with. God will show him the real people, not the outward, superficial holiness put up by them. **Ezekiel 2:1-7.**

GOD CALLS EZEKIEL

'He said to me, 'Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.' As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.' **Ezekiel 2:1-2**

Notice the effect the vision had upon him, he fell flat on his face and stayed there. God had to tell him to get up. God did not want him grovelling before him but wanted to speak to him face to face, as it were.

'Son of man', 'Et passim', is a term stressing the prophet's humanity, although given celestial visions, he was still a human being. The term later came to be used in a Messianic sense to describe the representative man, The son of man who would establish God's rule over the earth and usher in the Messianic age, **Daniel 7:9-13**, this is not how it is used in Ezekiel.

'I will speak with you', that is the only way man can truly know God, know God's will for him, etc. Expressly, **Ezekiel 1:3 / 1 Timothy 4:1 / 1 Peter 1:11.**

EZEKIEL'S MISSION TOLD

'He said: 'Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or be terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious people; open your mouth and eat what I give you.' **Ezekiel 2:3-8**

Ezekiel is being sent to the sons of Israel. Not to a foreign nation, but to his own people. God's description of the people shows right from the beginning what will be the reason for the message of judgement, 'they are a rebellious house.'

This phrase is used 7 times in 37 verses of **Ezekiel 2** and **Ezekiel 3**. **Ezekiel 2:5-8** and **Ezekiel 3:9 / Ezekiel 3:26-27**. God also calls them impudent and stubborn. God is not fooling the prophet into thinking this is going to be fruitful and prime soil for the word of the Lord.

Rebellious, Stubborn, unyielding, not docile or amenable to control, would not listen to reason, wanting to do their own thing. As impudent, shameless, and unblushing, they would do anything. This is how God sums up the people of Israel. He is further told that they will not react favourably to the message, but will act rebelliously, stubbornly and impudently.

The success of Ezekiel's work is 'I will send you.' God wants the people to be told of their state, what they do with it will be up to them. **Ezekiel 2:7**. Ezekiel simply has to tell them. Not an encouraging interview so far. Ezekiel is obviously not too keen on this job, but his responsibility is clearly outlined. Rebellion doesn't look on you, says God, but on them. Get on with it. So, he sees God give him a scroll. The scroll was written on completely, indicating that this was the whole message of God with nothing missing.

God wants those who preach his word to be faithful though people will not listen to Him. We need to sow the seed. God gives the increase. The reason for Ezekiel going to the people was 'that they might know there is a prophet among them.' He is to witness against the people. The people will not be able to say, 'I did not know.'

Jews are described as briers, thorns, and scorpions, briers, thorns, and scorpions scratch, bite, sting and choke. Indicating the kind of people, he was to preach to. He is not to be afraid of them.

THE SCROLL

'Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.' **Ezekiel 2:9-10**

These verses should be taken in the context of **Ezekiel 2:9-3:3**. The prophet had to deliver the whole counsel of God to the people, not just the parts he liked, or they would like. The message was lamentation, mourning, and woe. We'll see in the next chapter what he has to do with it.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

'And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.' So, I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, 'Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.' So, I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.' **Ezekiel 3:1-3**

Eating the scroll signifies the need for Ezekiel to be actively believing and living the words is to preach. The message was to become a part of him. He was not allowed to eat the scroll and then spit it out, but to swallow it and fill his stomach with it. It became a part of him.

The same situation is found in **Revelation 10:8** where John is doing the same thing, in John's case we know it is figurative because he was having a vision at the time.

What about Ezekiel, literal or figurative? In **Ezekiel 3:12**, he is lifted again by the spirit and taken to Tel a Bib, and it would seem that the same thing is happening here. It would seem that Ezekiel is speaking figuratively of the way God gives him the message.

Notice, however, both the divine and human elements in the prophetic message. The scroll is written on both sides, indicating the message was full, **Ezekiel 3:2**. Ezekiel opened his mouth, but God fed him the scroll. The prophet had to become committed to the message, even though he didn't particularly like it. He wasn't obligated to like it, only to proclaim it.

Ezekiel would now have the same sermon to preach for 6 years. Did Jeremiah complain because he had the same message all the time? [Jeremiah 20:7ff](#), violence and destruction. But the men were committed to the message. [Acts 4:20](#).

It was also to have an effect on his own conduct in life.

‘Sweet as honey.’ If the message was hard, it might seem strange for the scroll to taste sweet. The words were sweet because of their divine origin. [Psalm 19:7-10](#) / [Psalm 119:30](#). Jeremiah also found the words sweet. [Jeremiah 15:16](#). John also found the words sweet. [Revelation 10:8ff](#). Ezekiel needs to be convinced of the need for this type of message.

God never promised us a rose garden. God will always provide the tools for the job. God will give Ezekiel the disposition to be able to do the job. It may have been bitter to taste, but if applied to their lives it would transform their lives because the blessings of the Lord would return to them.

THE COMMISSIONING OF THE PROPHET DIFFICULTY OF THE MINISTRY

‘He then said to me: ‘Son of man, go now to the people of Israel and speak my words to them. You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and strange language, but to the people of Israel—not to many peoples of obscure speech and strange language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you. But the people of Israel are not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are hardened and obstinate. But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people.’ And he said to me, ‘Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. Go now to your people in exile and speak to them. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says,’ whether they listen or fail to listen.’ Ezekiel 3:4-11

God’s last orders. One more time Ezekiel is told what his job is to be. Don’t you see him wishing that all this Babylonian thing was not happening? Then he could be back in Jerusalem getting ready to do the simple and easy tasks of serving in the Temple. That would be child’s play compared to this hard message.

Back to reality, go! Says God, to your own people, not to a people he couldn’t understand, or who couldn’t understand him. ‘He wasn’t wrestling with a language barrier but a heart barrier.’ McGuigan.

God’s own people would not listen to Ezekiel because he is speaking God’s words to them. People are no different, if you speak God’s words today, they will not hear. You speak some new thing, people will flock to you.

Clearly, Ezekiel’s job is to be a hard one. God does not fool him into thinking it will be easy. He now describes them as hard-headed. But although that is the case, God will equip the prophet for the job. The people’s forehead is hard, the prophets will be harder.

The people are hard as flint, Ezekiel will be harder like adamant, ‘samir’, no real explanation of what it means, but the point is clear. Adamant, it’s a wonder some crank hasn’t suggested Ezekiel was prophesying of modern 20th-century music.

If some can get spaceships out of [Ezekiel 1](#), and 20th-century nuclear war out of [Ezekiel 38ff](#), why not that? God will supply Ezekiel with what he needs for the job. God says, ‘Here is your job. It is to a people who will not listen. The work will be hard. I will give you what you need to do the job. Now get on with it.’

THE VISION ENDS

‘Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound as the glory of the LORD rose from the place where it was standing. It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against each other and the sound of the wheels beside them, a loud rumbling sound. The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD on me. I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Aviv near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days—deeply distressed.’ Ezekiel 3:12-15

The vision is coming to an end. He sees the Spirit take him back home again, he gets one last sight of the chariot as he hears it rumbling into activity. Just to remind him what the message is. The hand of the Lord was strong upon him, he felt the pressure of the message on his heart. Now Ezekiel is upset. He does not want to speak this message, but he knows he has to. He is embittered and in a rage.

Hebrew, word ‘mar,’ means bitter, which can express fierce anger or temper. 2 Samuel 17:8 of a bear robbed of her cubs. It seems to me that this was the prophet’s personal reaction to being given this job. It is believed by some that this is a reference to the prophet catching a glimpse of, and being caught up in, God’s righteous anger over Israel, but Ezekiel hasn’t shown tremendous enthusiasm for his work so far.

The Lord’s departure was like the sound of a great earthquake, emphasising the power and might of God. So back in reality in Telabib, he sits for 7 days. Overwhelmed, for a whole week wondering how he could possibly take this heartbreaking message to them. Ezekiel was worried about the awesome responsibility God has placed on him. Ezekiel 3:16-21.

The awesome responsibility on those who teach God’s word. James 3:1. The number 7 stresses the idea of completeness. Seven days, Leviticus 8:33, Seven days of consecration of a priest. It may be a time for consecration for his task. Seven days was usually the time of mourning for the dead. Perhaps he was mourning over the judgement that was to come. Genesis 50:10 / Numbers 19:11 / Job 2:13.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE MINISTRY

‘At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their sin; but you will have saved yourself. ‘Again, when a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before them, they will die. Since you did not warn them, they will die for their sin. The righteous things that person did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the righteous person not to sin and they do not sin, they will surely live because they took warning, and you will have saved yourself.’ The hand of the LORD was on me there, and he said to me, ‘Get up and go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you.’ So I got up and went out to the plain. And the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown.’ Ezekiel 3:16-22

See God’s understanding of the humanness of his mouthpiece. He allows Ezekiel 7 days to sit and sulk a little, maybe to wonder, ‘why me’ and so on. But after seven days, ‘get up and get on with it’. Now God has given Ezekiel enough information about the message, the people he was to go to, and his own position. Yes, of course. But God’s patience says, once more I will explain to Ezekiel his job, you are a watchman.

The watchman had one specific task; to warn of approaching potential enemies. [2 Kings 9:16-20](#). Here is a good description of the watchman's work. Once he had warned the king and the city, his responsibility was ended. Ezekiel was set as a watchman over Israel, to warn them. This was his responsibility.

Also, the priest's responsibility was to make known to the people God's Law and to 'watch' that it is carried out. [Leviticus 10:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 24:8](#) / [Malachi 2:7](#) / [2 Chronicles 17:7](#).

His job is to warn both the righteous and the unrighteous, if he does this he has fulfilled his responsibility as a watchman. If he does not, then he has been unfaithful in his work.

THE WATCHMAN

The watchman of the Old Testament had the task of warning about approaching enemies, they also protected vineyards and fields during harvest season, [Jeremiah 31:6](#). They erected huts as shelters from the elements, [Job 27:18](#) and towers to enhance observation. Watchmen were also posted on the city walls, [2 Samuel 13:34](#), to scan the horizon for runners with messages for the king.

The skilled watchman was able to identify individual runners by their strides, [2 Samuel 18:27](#). The watchman also guarded the walls day and night against enemy attack, [1 Samuel 14:16](#) / [Jeremiah 51:12](#). He was responsible for warning the citizens of impending attacks by sounding the trumpet, [Jeremiah 6:17](#) / [Ezekiel 33:2](#) / [Ezekiel 33:6](#). There were times when a country would be in fear of a foreign invasion and wanted to be informed of all the movements of the enemy. In order to avoid an unexpected attack, they would have an 'early warning system', namely a watchman who lived on the borders of their country where the threat was expected.

Some were appointed as watchmen to work within the city to guard against fires, robbers and disturbers of the peace. There were also watchmen over the flocks to guard against thieves and beasts of prey.

In [Ezekiel 3:15-21](#) God says to Ezekiel, 'Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the House of Israel'.

The vision Ezekiel saw astonished him and he was overwhelmed for seven days. He was left in a state of confusion therefore God made his commission clearer to him. He was specifically chosen to be a watchman, this was not an entirely new name for a prophet. The term of watchman can be used in [Isaiah 52:8](#) and [Jeremiah 6:17](#).

We again see a watchman being used in [Ezekiel 3:17](#). Ezekiel is a watchman for Israel, but it was not the people who appointed him. They were not aware of the need for one, it was God who appointed a watchman for them. In [Ezekiel 33:1-9](#) the people are told they have been given a watchman, Ezekiel. God defends him before the people.

The Office of watchman laid down the trust expected of him, the duties demanded of him and the condition between him and those who employed him. The prophet or watchman was compelled to take notice of what God said concerning the people, he was to be different in the sense that he was first instructed to 'look to God' and look no further.

Those who preach must first hear, how can they teach others if they have not first learned themselves. Christian leaders are God's mouthpiece to the people. The Scriptures are written for our admonition, to warn sinners of the dangers of sin, and to point out the need for repentance.

The Old Testament prophets functioned as God's watchmen over Israel, [Jeremiah 6:17](#) / [Hosea 9:8](#) / [Isaiah 21:6-8](#).

They warned the people of impending disaster which was caused by their disobedience to God. However, like the watchmen on the city walls, his responsibility would end once he had passed on the warning to his superiors.

God tells Ezekiel his job is not to win people but to tell them the message. Having done this his responsibility would end. In the same way, we as Christians today are not responsible for what people do with the message of God, we are

required to tell others the message and they are responsible for what they do with that message. Evangelism is not only successful when many people are coming to Christ, it is also successful when the people are told about Jesus.

The prophet carried a heavy burden of accountability to God for the careful execution of His message. God knew that Ezekiel would do a good job as a watchman once he was convinced. He was concerned about the people, after all, they were his own countrymen and he was in the same situation as them; he was going through the same experience of captivity.

Ezekiel was worried about the message and how unpopular it would be to the people. He sat among the captives and said little but God comes to him and tells him to stop procrastinating, he was the watchman and he should have had something to say to them.

Like Ezekiel, we have a great responsibility to tell others the Gospel and what makes it more difficult sometimes is the content, that they are lost in sin. In the same manner, however, we shall be held accountable for not fulfilling our role as God's watchmen.

Just as God has made Ezekiel a watchman over Israel, Christ made the Apostles the watchmen over His spiritual Israel, the church. In the New Testament, we read that the apostle Paul had been the faithful watchman to the church at Ephesus, [Acts 20:25-31](#).

He had declared to sinners and saints the whole counsel of God. He never ceased to warn them by day and by night, 'with tears'. He reminds the elders at Ephesus of their responsibility as watchmen over the flock.

Also, [Hebrews 13:17](#) says, the readers are urged to obey their spiritual leaders and submit themselves to their authority for in them is found consistency in life and doctrine. The leaders have the responsibility of keeping watch over their souls with a view to their salvation and their own accountability to God with regard to their duty. God says to Ezekiel no, your job is not to win people, just to tell them. Evangelism is not necessarily successful if many come to Christ, it is successful if evangelists are telling of Jesus. We are not condemned by each failure to teach. Ezekiel is not being told that if he fails to tell one person then he will be punished.

He is warned against rebellion, which is a total refusal to teach. If I miss an opportunity to teach and am sorry for it, will I be condemned? This passage does not so teach. Either, who could be saved, for who has not missed an opportunity? We are commissioned to preach the gospel to the lost. Having done that our responsibility has ended.

THE DESTINY OF JERUSALEM AND ITS INHABITANTS, UTTER DESTRUCTION. EZEKIEL 3:22-5:4

'Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said: 'Go, shut yourself inside your house. And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes; you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people. I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious people. But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' Whoever will listen let them listen, and whoever will refuse let them refuse; for they are a rebellious people.' Ezekiel 3:16-27

Once again God says, please, get on with it! To emphasise this once again he is shown the vision, the war chariot. Remember the message, Ezekiel? Ezekiel is now being sent to work. His own house will be the centre of his mission work. Perhaps there lies a good example of where our work for the Lord should be centred.

He will have cords or bands placed upon him, he is told by God. This statement need not be understood literally. Most commentators find it hard to believe that this was done literally for we see his relative freedom of movement later in the book.

Understanding this figuratively, along with the next statement of the prophet being dumb would seem to be God's indication that his message will be limited to what he has been commissioned to tell. He will be restricted to that message only, judgement.

There is also the possibility that being bound refers to Ezekiel's inability to work properly because the people will not let him because of their way of life. In other words, they limited his effectiveness because they would not listen to the message.

The prophet's dumbness might be explained in the same way. Ezekiel would speak no message except that which the Lord directed him, [Ezekiel 3:27](#), in this sense he was dumb and would not speak on any other matter. This dumbness was released in [Ezekiel 24:27](#) / [Ezekiel 33:22](#) when the city was destroyed. His message from that point would change. [Ezekiel 11:23](#), 586 B.C.

At the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah was also struck dumb to prevent him from talking until John was born. [Luke 1](#). Simply stated, the prophet would say nothing for times were so bad.

People would not listen to any reproof, so why bother? [Amos 5:13](#). He would just speak that singular message to try and shock them out of their way of life.

It is possible that he was literally dumb during this time, except when speaking the words of God. Hence, 'But when I speak with you.' But if that is true, strangely, the elders in other places expected the prophet to speak to them. [Ezekiel 8:1](#) / [Ezekiel 14:1ff](#) / [Ezekiel 20:1ff](#). Jesus in Nazareth. [Matthew 13:53-58](#).

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

1. Three signs:

- a. The tile.
- b. The 430 days.
- c. The unclean food.

This chapter begins Ezekiel's first six years of singular preaching that Jerusalem must fall. That is what all the signs and preaching are meant to tell us and the people of Jerusalem. Ezekiel does his preaching and prophesying by symbols and his own actions. It was also used in [Isaiah 20:1](#) / [Jeremiah 19](#) / [Jeremiah 27-28:16](#).

Why symbols? The people would ask the reason for the prophet's actions, it provoked interest.

The same reason why Jesus used parables.

1. Stories have a habit of staying in the mind longer.
2. Parables provoked further interest and enquiry.

SIGN OF SIEGE

‘Now, son of man, take a block of clay, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the people of Israel.’ Ezekiel 4:1-3

THE SIGN OF THE TILE

By means of symbolic and figurative actions, Ezekiel sets forth the coming destruction of Jerusalem. The first sign is simple to understand and interpret. We may be again faced with a dilemma as to whether these events actually occurred, or whether they also were a vision.

It seems to me to be reasonable to accept these as actual events. When the prophet has a vision, he clearly states that fact. We saw this clearly in **Ezekiel 1-3**. Hence, we take it that these things were happening. That being the case imagine the news spreading of this crank carrying out all these signs before the people, probably just outside his own house.

Point of the sign. Jerusalem will be besieged.

The prophet gets a tile or brick, in Hebrew that, ‘lebena’ meaning, draws on it the city of Jerusalem. He sets it up and makes a model with it. Around it, he sets up siege works, siege walls and camps. He then gets an iron pan and places it between the and himself, and pushes the siege camps etc. toward the tile with the city on it. This indicates the gradual moving towards the city by Babylon, going in for the kill.

The ‘Iron pan’ is:

1. Designed to show the impenetrable wall of the Babylonian army.
2. Designed to show that it will be impossible to escape from the Babylonian army.

There is going to be a successful siege against the city of Jerusalem. Note, there were those who were saying that Nebuchadnezzar would not come, or if he did it would not be successful. **Ezekiel 24:1-14 / Ezekiel 21:18-27**.

SIGN OF DISCOMFORT, THE 430 DAYS

‘Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So, for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel. ‘After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her. I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege.’ Ezekiel 4:4-8

Point of this sign. There will be a total, national captivity. The prophet is told to lie on his left side for 390 days, and on his right side for 40 days. He will bear the iniquity or punishment of the two nations. He is not being punished for them, but he represents the people.

The prophet is to continue his acting of the siege as outlined in **Ezekiel 4:1-3**. This is to carry on simultaneously. Israel 390 days, equals 390 years. Judah 40 days equals 40 years, a day for a year, **Ezekiel 4:6**. So the days are equal to years. We know that because it tells us to do so. Only one other place is this the case, **Numbers 14:34**. Therefore, 390 plus 40 years, equals 430 years.

To the Jew, what do 430 years bring to mind? Egyptian captivity. **Exodus 12:40-41**.

Egyptian captivity was a total one and one in which every member of the family of Israel was involved. Ezekiel is telling the people that the same thing is going to happen again. Their near history is going to be like a repeat of what happened in Egypt. Bondage in Egypt.

Note, **Hosea 7:16 / Hosea 8:13**, Israel is told they are going to Egypt, captivity. That was the message. Then in **Hosea 9:3**, Egypt is clearly identified as Assyria. **Hosea 11:5 / Hosea 11:11**.

The northern kingdom of Israel is told by Hosea that they will be going to Egypt. What does that mean to them? Captivity. In reality, they were taken captive by Assyria.

This message was necessary because some of the people in Jerusalem and even some of those in captivity already did not believe that God would do this. They were relying on the promises of God that they would never leave the land. **Ezekiel 11:14-15 / Jeremiah 28:2ff**.

Why break down the 430 to 390 for Israel and 40 for Judah? Ezekiel does not say. Taking it that our symbolism of numbers is right, then 40 is also a significant number to the Jews.

Return to **Numbers 14:34** along with **Hebrews 3:7-4:2** we have the significance of 40 days. They were to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, a day for each year. It was a punishment for disobedience and lack of faith. So, Judah is being told that once again they are being punished for disobedience and lack of faith.

We have seen how they did not believe they deserved the punishment, but that God would preserve them in the land, **Ezekiel 11:14ff / Ezekiel 33:23ff / Jeremiah 28:2ff**. Hence, we suggest that the meaning of the sign and the numbers is entirely symbolic. It is suggested by some that the numbers have a chronological significance, but there is no real satisfactory answer this way.

However, you jumble up the figures there does not seem to be a suitable date reached. Pick any date for a start, 722, 586 B.C. and go forward, nothing makes sense. Even take 539 B.C. and work back, which gives us 969 B.C. there seems to be no significance there. It would seem to take them symbolically would make more sense, it certainly would be a valid point for the Jews of that time.

It has been suggested that Israel has a larger number because of the greater length of her captivity. This may be so. Others that it is larger because of her greater sin, but Judah is said to be in a worse state than Israel ever was. **Ezekiel 23:11**.

There are some problems thrown up by some commentators, some of which we mention here. The period of time between **Ezekiel 1:2-8:1** is 1 year 2 months. There are several possible numbers of dates during this time the maximum being 442.

Allowing for 430 days, plus the 7 days of **Ezekiel 3:15** provides a very tight schedule for the prophet. Some suggest that the 390 and 40 days run concurrently. Certainly, it seems the three signs here in **Ezekiel 4** were carried out simultaneously.

This leads some to suggest that he did not carry this lying about literally, maybe not, but that at least does not alter the point of the exercise. The LXX adds to some confusion by having the number 190 instead of 390. This is argued both ways by textual critics.

As stated, Ezekiel was to continue the first sign during this one. So, he was not lying on his side from dawn to dusk but was involved in carrying on these and the next one.

The Lord putting cords upon him would perhaps again be best understood along with **Ezekiel 3:25**. Ezekiel will be restricted by God to this message, and these signs during this time. He will be allowed to do nothing else.

SIGN OF DEFILED OR UNCLEAN FOOD

‘Take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them in a storage jar and use them to make bread for yourself. You are to eat it during the 390 days you lie on your side. Weigh out twenty shekels of food to eat each day and eat it at set times. Also measure out a sixth of a hin of water and drink it at set times. Eat the food as you would a loaf of barley bread; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel.’ The LORD said, ‘In this way the people of Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where I will drive them.’ Then I said, ‘Not so, Sovereign LORD! I have never defiled myself. From my youth until now I have never eaten anything found dead or torn by wild animals. No impure meat has ever entered my mouth.’ ‘Very well,’ he said, ‘I will let you bake your bread over cow dung instead of human excrement.’ He then said to me: ‘Son of man, I am about to cut off the food supply in Jerusalem. The people will eat rationed food in anxiety and drink rationed water in despair, for food and water will be scarce. They will be appalled at the sight of each other and will waste away because of their sin.’ Ezekiel 4:9-17

The third of the group of three signs concerning the siege and destruction of the city and the captivity of the people.

Point of the sign. The destruction of the temple and the captivity of the people.

Ezekiel is told to get together some food which he will eat all the time he is doing the laying about. He goes on diet, the same every day. He will eat and drink by measure. First, he is told to use human dung to do the cooking, but note the concession by God, he allows him cow’s dung instead.

In understanding the significance of this sign, remember that Ezekiel was a priest, and trained as a priest. He was told to eat unclean food, ceremonially unclean that is. Defilement of the people. **Deuteronomy 22:9**.

The sacrifice of the first fruits sanctified the produce of the people. Once that had been carried out at the temple in Jerusalem, they were ‘clean’. But the time is coming when they will have to eat unclean food, for the temple will be removed. **Hosea 9:3ff** where the prophet says the same of Israel. Firstfruits, **Leviticus 23:10 / Leviticus 23:17 / Exodus 23:19 / Deuteronomy 26:1-11**.

The point is not that they will literally have to cook their food on human or cow’s dung while in captivity, but that what they eat will be ceremonially unclean because the sacrificial system will be removed, for their Temple will be destroyed.

They really did not believe that their city, nor their temple, nor themselves would be removed from the land. God really wanted them to know that it was all going.

There is another point to this sign. The evidence of obvious siege conditions. His food and water are by measure, hardship, and famine, which are siege conditions.

MEASURES:

20 shekels, about 8 ounces a day.

1 shekel, 11.4 grams.

1/6th hin, 0.61 litres, or about just over 1 pint.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

1. The sign of the haircut.
2. We learn the reason for their punishment.

SIGN OF EZEKIEL'S HAIR. EZEKIEL 5:1-17

'Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair. When the days of your siege come to an end, burn a third of the hair inside the city. Take a third and strike it with the sword all around the city. And scatter a third to the wind. For I will pursue them with drawn sword. But take a few hairs and tuck them away in the folds of your garment. Again, take a few of these and throw them into the fire and burn them up. A fire will spread from there to all Israel.' Ezekiel 5:1-4

THE SIGN OF THE HAIRCUT

This is the fourth sign surrounding the same major point of the book. Not being able to find a suitable barber, Ezekiel takes a sword and cuts his hair. The law generally forbids cutting the head bald. [Leviticus 19:27ff](#) / [Leviticus 21:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 14:1](#). If it did happen it was a sign of mourning. [Isaiah 3:24](#) / [Isaiah 22:12](#) / [Micah 1:16](#) / [Jeremiah 16:6](#).

The point of the sign. The decimation of the people.

The prophet cuts some of the hair from his head and his beard. He then takes a balance and carefully weighs the cut hair into three equal parts. Can you imagine the interest and reaction of the people by this time? All the exiles come to see this weird priest.

1/3rd is burnt in the fire, indicating the pestilence and famine to come.

1/3rd is cut with a sword, indicating those who will be killed in battle.

1/3rd is scattered to the wind, indicating amongst those scattered, some would be killed, some preserved.

These verses must be understood in the light of [Ezekiel 5:12](#). Note what happens to each third. The remnant will represent a hope for the future. [2 Kings 25:1-21](#) / [2 Chronicles 36](#) / [Jeremiah 39](#). There is no problem in understanding what the prophet is graphically portraying here.

THREE DISCOURSES OF CONDEMNATION. EZEKIEL 5:5-7:27

1. The divine word explains the symbolic signs. Doom of Jerusalem. [Ezekiel 5:5-17](#).

The Cause of judgment. [Ezekiel 5:5-17](#).

The Nature of the judgment. [Ezekiel 5:10-17](#).

2. Devastation of the land: The judgment upon idolatrous places, and on the idol worshippers. [Ezekiel 6](#).

Desolation of the land, and destruction of the idolaters. [Ezekiel 6:1-7](#).

The survivors were banished among the heathen. [Ezekiel 6:8-10](#).

The punishment is just and well deserved. [Ezekiel 6:11-14](#).

3. The overthrow of Israel and the destruction of its inhabitant's Chapter 7.

The end comes. [Ezekiel 7:1-4](#).

The execution of the judgment is announced in verses 2-4. [Ezekiel 7:5-27](#).

The end is a terrible calamity, and is near at hand. [Ezekiel 7:5-9](#).

The rod is prepared, nothing will be left of the ungodly. [Ezekiel 7:10-13](#).

Irresistible destruction, Gold and silver will not save. [Ezekiel 7:14-22](#).

Captivity and overthrow of the people are coming. [Ezekiel 7:23:27](#).

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the centre of the nations, with countries all around her. Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees. ‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have been more unruly than the nations around you and have not followed my decrees or kept my laws. You have not even conformed to the standards of the nations around you. ‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations. Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. Therefore, in your midst parents will eat their children, and children will eat their parents. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds. Therefore, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will shave you; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.’ Ezekiel 5:5-12

Here is the reason for the judgement spelt out. Jerusalem, the city of David and the city of God. This was no Gentile capital that was being punished for their exceptional iniquity, like Nineveh, but the city where the God of heaven dwelt in the Temple.

‘JERUSALEM, IN THE CENTRE OF THE NATIONS’.

Geographically, this can be seen to be reasonably accurate. Jerusalem was known by the Rabbis as the naval of the earth. This thought was extended even to a 13th-century map of the world now in Hereford Cathedral. Jesus in His sermon on the mount referred to ‘a city set on a hill.’

But of course, the point is more than geographical. Israel was put there to shine. To be a light for the Gentiles. They were put there to teach the nations round about them concerning Jehovah the creator. But they blew it!

They were worse than the nations round about them. The sin of their neighbours wasn’t enough for them, they had to go one better, or perhaps that should be, one worse. [Ezekiel 16:47](#). They did not keep God’s laws, not even the inferior laws of the other nations, so low Israel has sunk. The other nations were at least loyal to their idol religion. [Jeremiah 2:1ff](#) / [Amos 1:1-3](#).

Note, ‘I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the likes of which I will never do again.’ This of course must refer to their final destruction in 586 B.C. In [Matthew 24:21](#) Jesus said, ‘For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.’

This was said of A.D.70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and Vespasian. Here is an example of the problems with taking the words of the prophets literally at all costs. If we do that here, we have a problem, for Jesus and Ezekiel would conflict. Here are prophets using prophetic speech, using hyperbole to emphasize the horror of the judgement.

‘Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath on them, they will know that I the LORD have spoken in my zeal. ‘I will make you a ruin and a reproach among the nations around you, in the sight of all who pass by. You will be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the nations around you when I inflict punishment on you in anger and in wrath and with stinging rebuke. I the LORD have spoken. When I shoot at you with my deadly and destructive arrows of famine, I will shoot to destroy you. I will bring more and more famine upon you and cut off your supply of food. I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the LORD have spoken. [Ezekiel 5:13-17](#)

Here God sums up His feelings and his actions which will come about because of their sin. It’s a fearful day when God becomes angry with you. ‘Be angry but sin not.’ [Ephesians 4:26](#)

Here we see God’s four sore judgments which he will send upon the earth. This comes up again in [Ezekiel 14:12ff](#). Sword, famine, wild beasts, pestilence. [Revelation 6:1-9](#).

Taylor says of this section, ‘Unparalleled sin demands unparalleled punishment.’

Notice the phrases, ‘spend my wrath’, ‘vent my wrath’, here is the unburdening of powerful emotions.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY OF EZEKIEL 6-7

1. Denunciation of wickedness.

2. Promise of punishment.

PROPHECY AGAINST THE MOUNTAINS. EZEKIEL 6:1-14

MEN AND THE LAND

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, set your face against the mountains of Israel; prophesy against them and say: ‘You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: I am about to bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places. Your altars will be demolished, and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will slay your people in front of your idols. I will lay the dead bodies of the Israelites in front of their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. Wherever you live, the towns will be laid waste and the high places demolished, so that your altars will be laid waste and devastated, your idols smashed and ruined, your incense altars broken down, and what you have made wiped out. Your people will fall slain among you, and you will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 6:1-7

Notice how the land is addressed by God rather than its inhabitants. A survey of the religious corruption of this time will show that there were shrines and temples and so on in every valley, on every hill there was. So, it is as if the land had been polluted by this idolatry.

Not only individual people were polluted, but it was so extensive that the whole nation, even as it were the whole land itself was polluted.

In Isaiah 1, Mountains are involved in a court case. The idea of God being opposed to their idolatry. Ezekiel 13:7 / Ezekiel 21:2 / Ezekiel 25:2 / Ezekiel 28:21 / Ezekiel 38:2.

‘Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.’ Proverbs 14:34.

These high places, ‘bamot’, were not a new thing but an old problem. They at one time had been tolerated by the prophets, 1 Samuel 9:14 / 1 Kings 3:4, but then they were condemned and reformed, 2 Kings 23:1ff. Their condemnation is clearly outlined in these verses. Notice how they are addressed. They are not God’s places of worship at all, but:

Your high places.

Your incense altars.

Your altars.

Your idols.

Four times God says, ‘And ye shall know that I am Jehovah’, Ezekiel 6:7 / Ezekiel 6:10 / Ezekiel 6:13 / Ezekiel 6:14. It is used 54 times directly in the Ezekiel and 18 times indirectly. Indicates that they are going to die pleading before their idols when the siege takes place. This would desecrate them, unclean’. This is what sin does. This is what idols cannot do. This is what God will do because God is superior.

Isaiah 44:9-20 and Jeremiah 10 refer to the people cutting down trees and using some to carve out a god and from the same tree use wood to make a fire. The Mount Carmel incident with Elijah proved God is superior.

‘But I will spare some, for some of you will escape the sword when you are scattered among the lands and nations. Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember me—how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices. And they will know that I am the LORD; I did not threaten in vain to bring this calamity on them. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Strike your hands together and stamp your feet and cry out ‘Alas!’ because of all the wicked and detestable practices of the people of Israel, for they will fall by the sword, famine and plague. One who is far away will die of the plague, and one who is near will fall by the sword, and anyone who survives and is spared will die of famine. So, will I pour out my wrath on them. And they will know that I am the LORD, when their people lie slain among their idols around their altars, on every high hill and on all the mountaintops, under every spreading tree and every leafy oak—places where they offered fragrant incense to all their idols. And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land a desolate waste from the desert to Diblah—wherever they live. Then they will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 6:8-14

Even so, a remnant will survive. But they will have a changed attitude. There is a further denunciation of the idolatry amongst the people.

Note verse 9, the idols spoken of are a favourite of Ezekiel. They are Hebrew, ‘Gillulim’, which are described as large idols. Ezekiel uses this word for idols 38 times. It is used only 9 other times in the Old Testament outside this book. The Hebrew word comes from two roots, one meaning a detested thing, the second referring to a pallet of dung.

Note, [Ezekiel 6:7](#) / [Ezekiel 6:10](#) / [Ezekiel 6:13-14](#), also [Ezekiel 7:4](#) / [Ezekiel 7:9](#) / [Ezekiel 7:27](#).

‘They, you, shall know that I am the Lord.’ This statement is a common one in Ezekiel. God is asserting His authority here not only by His words but by his acts.

Here is Jehovah, Yahweh revealed to Moses at the bush. [Exodus 3:6](#) / [Exodus 3:14](#) / [Exodus 6:7](#). This name was the name which identified God to the Israelites. The people would not recognise the identity of God, they were looking for others.

This was an early problem, in that they would not give God his place. They would not let God be God. [Isaiah 49:9-11](#). This section of Isaiah proclaims the fact that those of His people who rejected Him, He would reject. The promises would then be given to others.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

THE END HAS COME. EZEKIEL 7:1-27

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to the land of Israel: ‘The end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land! The end is now upon you, and I will unleash my anger against you. I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices. I will not look on you with pity; I will not spare you. I will surely repay you for your conduct and for the detestable practices among you. ‘Then you will know that I am the LORD.’ ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘Disaster! Unheard-of disaster! See, it comes! The end has come! The end has come! It has roused itself against you. See, it comes! Doom has come upon you, upon you who dwell in the land. The time has come! The day is near! There is panic, not joy, on the mountains. I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you. I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices. I will not look on you with pity; I will not spare you. I

will repay you for your conduct and for the detestable practices among you. 'Then you will know that it is I the LORD who strikes you. 'See, the day! See, it comes! Doom has burst forth, the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed! Violence has arisen, a rod to punish the wicked. None of the people will be left, none of that crowd—none of their wealth, nothing of value. The time has come! The day has arrived! Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller grieve, for my wrath is on the whole crowd. The seller will not recover the property that was sold—as long as both buyer and seller live. For the vision concerning the whole crowd will not be reversed. Because of their sins, not one of them will preserve their life.' Ezekiel 7:1-13

Five times end is stressed. Not just an end, but 'THE END'. Not like the T.V. programmes, which have an end of part one. No, this is the end of all parts. End, 'qes', the end 'haqqes', awakened, 'hewques'.

Throughout the former prophets had been warnings about punishment soon to come. There had been warnings of destruction and judgement before, but they had always been partial and not total.

Here in Ezekiel, we find the time has come. The idea is of a complete, final end to all normality in the land. Their punishment is due to 'your ways'.

It is their fault this is going to happen. It is coming, and coming quickly. Notice how he repeats, the day is near, the time is coming, etc. The message is clear.

'They have blown the trumpet, they have made all things ready, but no one will go into battle, for my wrath is on the whole crowd. Outside is the sword; inside are plague and famine. Those in the country will die by the sword; those in the city will be devoured by famine and plague. The fugitives who escape will flee to the mountains. Like doves of the valleys, they will all moan, each for their own sins. Every hand will go limp; every leg will be wet with urine. They will put on sackcloth and be clothed with terror. Every face will be covered with shame, and every head will be shaved. 'They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be treated as a thing unclean. Their silver and gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath. It will not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs, for it has caused them to stumble into sin. They took pride in their beautiful jewellery and used it to make their detestable idols. They made it into vile images; therefore, I will make it a thing unclean for them. I will give their wealth as plunder to foreigners and as loot to the wicked of the earth, who will defile it. I will turn my face away from the people, and robbers will desecrate the place I treasure. They will enter it and will defile it. 'Prepare chains!

For the land is full of bloodshed, and the city is full of violence. I will bring the most wicked of nations to take possession of their houses. I will put an end to the pride of the mighty, and their sanctuaries will be desecrated. When terror comes, they will seek peace in vain. Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumour upon rumour. They will go searching for a vision from the prophet, priestly instruction in the law will cease, the counsel of the elders will come to an end. The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with despair, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble. I will deal with them according to their conduct, and by their own standards I will judge them. 'Then they will know that I am the LORD.' Ezekiel 7:14-27

The people will be powerless. Preparation of the army to defect to their enemies. Their military strength is powerless. Trumpets were blown for 4 reasons:

1. To gather the people.
2. To get the people on the march.
3. To announce rejoicing.
4. To warn of imminent danger. Numbers 10:5ff / Joel 2:1.

Sorrow, trying to get the people to feel sorry for them. Payment, buy their way out of it. Their money is powerless. Whether the gold and silver here refer to their riches or their idols is up for grabs. Idolatry, their idols are powerless. Peace terms, turn to God.

Their 11th hour turning to God will be powerless. Why? Because God is not merciful?

Does God not accept repentance? No. At that time it will be too late.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with Ezekiel's denunciations of Judah. 591-586 B.C. Ezekiel 8 and Ezekiel 11 are the reasons for Ezekiel 9 and Ezekiel 10.

Yahweh's withdrawal from the doomed city. Ezekiel 8-11.

Abominations of idolatry in the temple precincts. Ezekiel 8.

Time and place of the Divine revelation. Ezekiel 8:1-4.

The first abomination picture is the image of Jealousy. Ezekiel 8:5-6.

The second abomination is the worship of beasts. Ezekiel 8:7-13.

The third abomination is the worship of Tammuz. Ezekiel 8:14-15.

The fourth abomination is the worship of the sun by the priests. Ezekiel 8:16-18.

SUMMARY

1. Ezekiel is shown the religious corruption in the city of Jerusalem.
2. We note the progression of idolatry shown to the prophet.

EZEKIEL WAS TAKEN TO JERUSALEM. 591 B.C.

'In the sixth year, in the sixth month on the fifth day, while I was sitting in my house and the elders of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign LORD came on me there. I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal. He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain.' Ezekiel 8:1-4

The scene is Ezekiel's house in Babylonia. This is 14 months after his commission. The elders of Judah have come for a message from God, possibly for consolation. These of course were the elders of Judah who were in captivity along with Ezekiel. Here is an example of the prophet speaking to the exiles about the people in Judah.

Now it seems that Ezekiel, who was about 31, really did not want to tell them the message. He knew the message from God, but it was going to take another vision to convince him that these men needed telling. We will find out more about these elders in a later attempt by them to get a message from the prophet. Ezekiel 14:1 / Ezekiel 20:1. What we are going to read about now is clearly described by the prophet as 'visions of God'. This was not the case say in Ezekiel 4:1, which would lead to the idea that some things were done literally, others were not. He is having a vision.

Notice that he sees the appearance of a man like that in Ezekiel 1:27. The one who sat on the throne was God, here we see the same form equated with the Spirit who lifted him up.

Let us clearly see that Ezekiel was brought in a vision to Jerusalem. His first point of call was the north gateway of the inner court of the temple. The first thing he saw there was an image of jealousy, and the glory of God. There is a sharp contrast between these two.

God will now give the prophet a 'guided tour' of the city pointing out the major problems. Ezekiel is shown four forms of idolatry which represent that of the whole nation.

IDOLATRY IN THE TEMPLE. EZEKIEL 8:5-18

THE IMAGE OF JEALOUSY

'Then he said to me, 'Son of man, look toward the north.' So, I looked, and in the entrance north of the gate of the altar I saw this idol of jealousy. And he said to me, 'Son of man, do you see what they are doing—the utterly detestable things the Israelites are doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable.' Ezekiel 8:5-6

This image is so-called because it provokes jealousy. It is believed that this was some image which they had connected with the worship of Jehovah. No one has any idea what kind of image it was. But to get into the temple, you had to pass this image at the north gate. This was the most prestigious gate; the king's gate. Exodus 20:5 / Acts 17:16.

Notice how the people's actions were driving God from His sanctuary. They were forcing God to leave where He wanted to be. More to come.

ANIMAL WORSHIP

'Then he brought me to the entrance to the court. I looked, and I saw a hole in the wall. He said to me, 'Son of man, now dig into the wall.' So, I dug into the wall and saw a doorway there. And he said to me, 'Go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here.' So, I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and unclean animals and all the idols of Israel. In front of them stood seventy elders of Israel, and Jaazaniah son of Shaphan was standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising. He said to me, 'Son of man, have you seen what the elders of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.' Again, he said, 'You will see them doing things that are even more detestable.' Ezekiel 8:7-13

Digging in the wall of the court, the prophet is shown a secret door. One that certain people do not want to be known; for the people with something to hide. Here is a place where idol worship is carried out by hypocrites. Those who do not want to be known as idol worshippers, so they do it in secret.

On entering the room, he sees the idolatry going on. All these animals portrayed on the walls are not pictures. It is the idea of being engraved, or carved in relief. Involved with this were 70 elders. This was a number representative of the whole nation. Numbers 11:16 / Exodus 24:9.

One of these is named, Jaazaniah, son of Shaphan. Shaphan was King Josiah's secretary of state, 2 Kings 22:3. One of his sons, Ahikam was an active supporter of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 26:24.

He is saying that the whole people are involved in this, and even the respectable leaders are secretly involved in it all too. They all were thinking that done in secret, no one, not even God could see them, for they believed God had forsaken the land. More to come.

THE WORSHIP OF TAMMUZ

‘Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD, and I saw women sitting there, mourning the god Tammuz. He said to me, ‘Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more detestable than this.’ Ezekiel 8:14-15

This was a Sumerian/Babylonian god who is said to have died and gone into the underworld. Because of this, all vegetation died. This god was said to die during the winter months and during extremely dry periods. Whoever this was, it amounted to nature worship. The women weeping was part of the worship of course, which signified their sorrow for this god’s departure to wherever he went.

Ezekiel might expect to see the people weeping over the city of Jerusalem and all the sins committed in it, but no. Joel 2:17. More to come.

THE SUN WORSHIP

‘He then brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD, and there at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men. With their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east.’ Ezekiel 8:16

The worship of the sun by the people of Judah certainly was not new. Josiah had done some previous reforming of sun worship. 2 Kings 23:11. Obviously, it had not been too successful a reform, for here it is in full bloom. Hence, we see Josiah’s reform was ineffective.

Here it is going on at the very gate of the temple in full view of everyone, including, figuratively, God. There are 25 men involved in this worship. This is possibly a reference to the 24 courses of the priests and the high priest. 1 Chronicles 24:7-18. Here are the priests of the Most High God with their backs to Him and His sanctuary, and their faces toward the rising of the sun to the east.

‘He said to me, ‘Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the people of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with violence and continually arouse my anger? Look at them putting the branch to their nose! Therefore, I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them.’ Ezekiel 8:17-18

‘Don’t you think they deserve it?’ God asks the prophet. After all this, Ezekiel is maybe a little more convinced that judgement is deserved. So along with all the idolatry going on in the land, the people are also involved in violence; they are completely breaking God’s law. So, they will be punished.

‘They put a branch to their nose.’ This statement is a little obscure. Several ideas are put forward to explain the statement.

1. An alternative reading. ‘They put forth a stench before my nose.’
2. A sign of contempt and insult.

3. A reverent part of Sumerian sun worship.

Whatever it was, it certainly was not godly.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

THE ANGELS WHICH SMITE JERUSALEM. SLAUGHTER OF THE INHABITANTS.

The appearance of the servants to execute judgments. Ezekiel 9:1-2.

The Divine command. Ezekiel 9:3-7.

Intercession of the prophet, and answer of the Lord. Ezekiel 9:8-11.

SUMMARY

1. The innocent are marked by a man clothed in linen.
2. Six men slaughter the unmarked people.
3. The judgement begins at the sanctuary.

MARKING OF THE INNOCENT

‘Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, ‘Bring near those who are appointed to execute judgment on the city, each with a weapon in his hand.’ And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the LORD called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, ‘Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.’ Ezekiel 9:1-4

7 men appear in the vision described as executioners of the city. 6 of them have weapons for destroying. These ‘destroying weapons’ are war clubs/instruments, Hebrew, ‘keli’. This word is used of Medo/Persia as God’s weapon of destruction on Babylon. **Jeremiah 51:20.**

There is no mistaking what these men are here for. They have one job to do and are equipped to do it well. **Exodus 12:23 / 2 Samuel 24:15-17.** 1 man is clothed in linen and has a writing case at his side, the equipment of a scribe.

These men come from the north, past the upper gate. Ezekiel 1:4 / Ezekiel 8:5. They stood by the bronze altar, which was the altar of burnt offerings in the temple court. Exodus 38:1ff. It is like they are standing at attention awaiting orders.

The orders come as God gets off his chariot and speaks with the seven men. First, to the one in the linen, he instructs him to go through the city and put a mark on all those who are actively groaning over the idolatry etc. Those who disapprove of it, and say so. The mark is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 'tav'. This was something like an 'X'. Genesis 4:15 Cain marked was a sign of God's protection.

THE SLAUGHTER

'As I listened, he said to the others, 'Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, the mothers and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary.' So, they began with the old men who were in front of the temple. Then he said to them, 'Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go!' So, they went out and began killing throughout the city.' Ezekiel 9:5-7

After the marking, the 6 men with the slaughter weapons are told to go through the city and kill everyone who does not have the mark. It is important to note that all without the mark were killed, and all with the mark were survivors. Hence to emphasize this they are told to spare no one, even those who may seem innocent, e.g. old men, children etc.

Two important elements in this vision need to be stated here to properly understand it, and to make sure we do not misunderstand what is happening. Part of the vision can be literally understood, i.e. there will be a destruction of the city and people. Other parts of it cannot be understood literally, e.g. The vision says all the righteous survived. Yet Ezekiel 21:3-4 tells us that both righteous and wicked would be killed.

It was not historically fulfilled as Ezekiel 9 tells us. Now, this is not a great problem for us, for we expect to see figurative things in a vision anyway, if we get some literal truths in there too, then that is like a bonus for us.

The men are told to 'begin at my sanctuary.' You recall the 'your' altars, high places, etc. of Ezekiel 6. They begin right at the very place where God dwelt.

Here are those who should know better. The priests and officials of the temple should have been pure, righteous, and God-fearing, but they were the worst offenders. They then would be punished first.

This would break Ezekiel's heart, for maybe those he knew were amongst this group in the sanctuary. If he had trained as a priest, then he would undoubtedly know those involved in the temple.

Those who are closest to God gave them greater responsibility. With greater knowledge comes greater responsibility. This is a principle that the New Testament echoes.

The person who has become a Christian knows more, has shared more blessings from God, and consequently has more responsibility. If the Christian leaves God, then he will face the same punishment as the priests viewed in this chapter of Ezekiel. 2 Peter 2:20-22 / Hebrews 6:4-8.

THE PROPHET'S PLEA

'While they were killing, and I was left alone, I fell facedown, crying out, 'Alas, Sovereign LORD! Are you going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel in this outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?' He answered me, 'The sin of the people of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say,

‘The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see.’ So, I will not look on them with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own heads what they have done.’ Then the man in linen with the writing kit at his side brought back word, saying, ‘I have done as you commanded.’ Ezekiel 9:8-11

Here is a heart-breaking sigh by the prophet, ‘are you going to kill everybody?’ The answer comes back, ‘yes, almost!’

We know there was a remnant from the previous marking, but it is very clear that the man in linen did not need much ink. Abraham, Genesis 18:22ff / Amos 7:1-6.

This man comes back and reports that his work is done.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

BURNING OF JERUSALEM, AND WITHDRAWAL OF THE GLORY OF YAHWEH FROM THE SANCTUARY

1. Jerusalem to be burned with fire, the angel scatters coals of fire over Jerusalem. Ezekiel 10:1-8.
2. The glory of Jehovah forsakes the Temple. Ezekiel 10:9-22.

SUMMARY

1. The man in linen scatters burning coals over the city.
2. We get another description of the war chariot.
3. The glory of the Lord leaves the sanctuary.

‘I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of lapis lazuli above the vault that was over the heads of the cherubim. The LORD said to the man clothed in linen, ‘Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city.’ And as I watched, he went in. Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD. The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks. When the LORD commanded the man in linen, ‘Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim,’ the man went in and stood beside a wheel. Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand to the fire that was among them. He took up some of it and put it into the hands of the man in linen, who took it and went out. (Under the wings of the cherubim could be seen what looked like human hands.)’ Ezekiel 10:1-8

THE BURNING COALS SCATTERED

The vision continues, as God addresses the man clothed in linen once again. This time his work is different. In **Ezekiel 9** he is the one element of mercy amongst the 7 men working for God. Now we see that mercy and justice are intermingled. This is why the man in linen is chosen to pour the coals over the city. Mercy doesn't despise justice. It's easy to do the good jobs, but this man is equally ready to carry out any job for the Lord. In **Ezekiel 9** this man marked the innocent, but now he is instructed to throw burning coals over the city, a sign, **Isaiah 6:6**, of cleansing and destruction. Notice where he gets the coals from. One of the cherubim uses their hand to get some burning coals from within the chariot and gives them to the man who then proceeds with the job. Ezekiel will like the nice easy work of the priest, looking after the 'innocent', but he doesn't care for the work of the prophet handing out messages of judgement to those who appear innocent but are rotten. He is being told to do as the man in linen is doing, to carry out tasks of justice as well as mercy.

'I looked, and I saw beside the cherubim four wheels, one beside each of the cherubim; the wheels sparkled like topaz. As for their appearance, the four of them looked alike; each was like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the cherubim faced; the wheels did not turn about as the cherubim went. The cherubim went in whatever direction the head faced, without turning as they went. Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels. I heard the wheels being called 'the whirling wheels.' Each of the cherubim had four faces: One face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a human being, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River. When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side. When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them. Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized that they were cherubim. Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like human hands. Their faces had the same appearance as those I had seen by the Kebar River. Each one went straight ahead. **Ezekiel 10:9-22**

The chariot Here is another picture of the chariot we saw in Ezekiel.

1. Why is it here?

To remind Ezekiel of the terrible judgement coming on Jerusalem and her inhabitants.

It gives us a couple of extra explanations:

Ezekiel 10:12, the living creatures are said to have eyes all over them. Look at the footnote in R.S.V. **Ezekiel 10:20**, which identifies the living creatures as cherubim.

Ezekiel 10:14 and **Ezekiel 10:22**, we see that he substitutes the face of the ox or bull for a cherub. Why this is done is uncertain. Perhaps this was the predominant face. Having destroyed the people, **Ezekiel 9**, and the city, **Ezekiel 10**, the chariot leaves the sanctuary.

The main role of the cherubim was protection, Garden of Eden, **Genesis 3:24**. Tablets of the law, **Exodus 25:18ff**, symbolic. Solomon's Temple, at the gate and door of the sanctuary, **2 Chronicles 3:17 / Exodus 41:18**.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

THREATENING OF JUDGMENT AND PROMISE OF MERCY. CONCLUSION OF THE VISION

Judgment upon the rulers of the nation. Ezekiel 11:1-13.

The twenty-five men, chiefs of the nation. Ezekiel 11:1-4.

Prophecy against the ungodly counsel, which is confirming the people in their sins. Ezekiel 11:5-12.

The sudden death of Pelatiah. Ezekiel 11:13.

The promise of gathering Israel out of the nations. Ezekiel 11:14-21.

The glory of Jehovah forsakes the doomed city. Ezekiel 11:22-25.

SUMMARY

1. Ezekiel is shown political and moral corruption in Jerusalem.
2. We learn that the exiles and not the inhabitants of Jerusalem are being protected by God.
3. The glory of the Lord leaves Jerusalem.

‘Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east. There at the entrance of the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. The LORD said to me, ‘Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in this city. They say, ‘Haven’t our houses been recently rebuilt? This city is a pot, and we are the meat in it.’ Therefore, prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man.’ Ezekiel 11:1-4

THE 2 WICKED COUNSELLORS

Two men are singled out amongst 25 men who are giving council. Jaazaniah and Pelatiah were obviously well-known men which is why they are named, they would definitely be known to the prophet. These princes of the people are giving wicked counsel according to God. Again, there might be the inference that the prophet is surprised, for these are men he would know and would not expect to be involved in anti-Jehovah propaganda.

Their counsel was, ‘The time is not here to build houses, this city is the Caldron, and we are the flesh’.

With an illustration of a cooking pot with fresh meat in it ready to be cooked, they were saying, ‘Don’t relax and settle, prepare for war’.

Now, this contradicted what God was saying through Jeremiah to those in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was being told to submit to Nebuchadnezzar. **Jeremiah 21:8-10**. This was not only the way to save their lives, but it was also the will of God. The people in Jerusalem thought that God was with them, they believed Jeremiah was wrong. They thought that

because they were left and Jehoiachin and the rest were away in Babylon, they were the good guys and the exiles were the bad guys. They were doing what God had said, **Jeremiah 29:5**.

Ellison says, in Jeremiah, they were trusting in themselves not God. 'For them the exiles under Jehoiachin were the offal thrown out on the dung-heap of Babylonia, they were the good flesh preserved by God in Jerusalem.'

This is exactly the thought in **Ezekiel 11:15**, the pot, the city and the people.

'Then the Spirit of the LORD came on me, and he told me to say: 'This is what the LORD says: That is what you are saying, you leaders in Israel, but I know what is going through your mind. You have killed many people in this city and filled its streets with the dead. 'Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The bodies you have thrown there are the meat and this city is the pot, but I will drive you out of it. You fear the sword, and the sword is what I will bring against you, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will drive you out of the city and deliver you into the hands of foreigners and inflict punishment on you. You will fall by the sword, and I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. This city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be the meat in it; I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. And you will know that I am the LORD, for you have not followed my decrees or kept my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you.'

Ezekiel 11:5-12

Paul says that God will one day judge the secret things of men. Here are men whose hearts are open to God, He knows exactly what they are thinking. Then God agrees with them, the city is a cauldron of sorts, but it is that because of what the leaders have done. They have made it a cauldron and the flesh are all those who have suffered death because of the wicked counsel of these men.

However, God's message for these men shows His sovereignty which they would not accept. Their statement showed that they feared the sword coming on them in the city. God would not even allow that small privilege of ever saying they were right, for they would be judged by the sword outside the city. They would be judged at the 'border of Israel'.

This undoubtedly refers to the historical account of the times in **2 Kings 25:18-21** and **Jeremiah 52:3-11**. This tells us that the king, his sons, and the leaders of Israel were taken by Nebuzaradan and judged at Riblah. Riblah was on the extreme border of the promised land, even beyond Damascus.

'Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell facedown and cried out in a loud voice, 'Alas, Sovereign LORD! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel? The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, the people of Jerusalem have said of your fellow exiles and all the other Israelites, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.' 'Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.' 'Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.' 'They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD'. Ezekiel 11:13-21

THE DEATH OF PELATIAH

In the vision, Pelatiah drops dead. This shocked the prophet to exclaim, 'Are you going to kill everyone?' Ezekiel is worrying and hurting for his people because he thinks God is going to wipe them all out. God says, 'Let me tell you the kind of people we are talking about'.

Here is where Ellison's quote above fits in exactly. That is exactly what the people in Jerusalem thought, but God shows Ezekiel that they have got it the wrong way around. Those in Jerusalem may have the temple for a sanctuary, but we will soon see God's glory leave that sanctuary at the end of the vision.

However, for those in exile, God will be their sanctuary. He will provide them with the care, protection and presence that they needed from Him until He chooses to send the book. To the exiles are given all the promises for the future.

This is signified in the example of heart surgery. God will give them a new heart, but only those who want a new heart. There are always too many who harden their hearts continually and who will now allow the stone heart to be touched or removed by the Lord.

'Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me, and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.' Ezekiel 11:22-25

So, we see the Lord forced out of His own sanctuary. He clearly stated that he had been driven out, **Ezekiel 8:6**. No longer did He dwell in the midst of His people. The ritual may continue, but the offerings and sacrifices meant even less than they had done. God's temple without God is useless. God's temple without God is no longer God's temple. **Revelation 2:5 / Revelation 3:14-22**.

So, he returns from his vision to the elders in Telabib, **Ezekiel 8:1**. They are waiting for some word from him, he tells them all that God had shown him in the vision. Tempting to only mention the man in linen marking out the righteous. Ezekiel tells it all, the whole counsel of God.

This vision is now ended. The Glory that left the temple was the same that had:

Guided Israel, **Exodus 13:21 / Exodus 14:19ff**.

Covered Sinai. **Exodus 24:15-18**.

Filled the Temple. **2 Chronicles 7:1**.

Filled the Tabernacle. **Exodus 40:34**.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

THE NATION'S SINFULNESS AND INEVITABLE DOOM. EZEKIEL 12-19

SUMMARY

1. Two signs:

- a. The exiles baggage.
 - b. Eating and drinking with fear.
2. The people and their king will go into exile.

TWO SYMBOLIC ACTS PORTRAYING THE DEPARTURE OF THE KING AND THE PEOPLE, AND BREAD OF TEARS

Symbolic action of the emigration of king and people from Jerusalem. Ezekiel 12:1-7.

Explanation of the symbolic action. Ezekiel 12:8-16.

A sign depicting the terrors and consequences of the conquest of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 12:17-20.

Declarations to remove all doubt as to the truth of the threat. Ezekiel 12:21-28.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people. ‘Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings for exile and in the daytime, as they watch, set out and go from where you are to another place. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious people. During the daytime, while they watch, bring out your belongings packed for exile. Then in the evening, while they are watching, go out like those who go into exile. While they watch, dig through the wall and take your belongings out through it. Put them on your shoulder as they are watching and carry them out at dusk. Cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have made you a sign to the Israelites.’ So, I did as I was commanded. During the day I brought out my things packed for exile. Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands. I took my belongings out at dusk, carrying them on my shoulders while they watched. In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, did not the Israelites, that rebellious people, ask you, ‘What are you doing?’ ‘Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This prophecy concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the Israelites who are there.’ Say to them, ‘I am a sign to you.’ ‘As I have done, so it will be done to them. They will go into exile as captives. ‘The prince among them will put his things on his shoulder at dusk and leave, and a hole will be dug in the wall for him to go through. He will cover his face so that he cannot see the land. I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die. I will scatter to the winds all those around him—his staff and all his troops—and I will pursue them with drawn sword. ‘They will know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries. But I will spare a few of them from the sword, famine and plague, so that in the nations where they go they may acknowledge all their detestable practices. Then they will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 12:1-16

THE EXILES BAGGAGE

This is a straightforward sign by the prophet to show the people that there would be a further group of people going into exile including the king, Zedekiah. We are shown the sign, then the prophet gives an explanation of his actions. We are back in the realms of reality as we were in Ezekiel 4ff. There is no indication that this is a vision, so we see the prophet carrying out these strange actions.

We see him prepare baggage for exile. Common sense tells us what that might have been. The lightest and least possessions which could have been carried would be taken with them. So, Ezekiel acted this out in the sight of the people. He has two points marked out between which he walks; his house is one point, and the other is unspecified.

He also has to dig through the wall of his own house, probably the Hebrew would indicate that rather than the city wall. Having gone through the hole in the wall he then walks his path with his face covered.

All this unusual action was done in one day. Again, we might picture that audience wondering if this prophet really had been affected by the heat in this flat, scorching hot land.

The following day God asks Ezekiel, ‘Well, did they ask you?’ God proceeds to explain what these actions meant. The sign concerns the prince and the people. It becomes clear that Ezekiel is giving a specific future prophecy concerning the events surrounding Zedekiah at the fall of Jerusalem. **Jeremiah 52:4-11 / 2 Kings 25:1-7 / Jeremiah 39:4.**

This was acted out in about 591 B.C. Zedekiah did not rebel against Babylon until about 588 B.C. and finally was defeated in 586 B.C. The people would be able to put **Deuteronomy 18** into action on Ezekiel, he would come out on top.

Note, Zedekiah is called a prince rather than king, Hebrew, ‘nasi’, rather than ‘melek’. Ezekiel never calls Zedekiah king as he does Jehoiachin, **Ezekiel 17:12**. This word is also used of Solomon, **1 Kings 11:34**, in relation to his continuing as ruler, prince after his sin had caused God to allow a division of the kingdom.

The point being with Zedekiah was that he was not really the rightful king and that neither the exiles nor the people of Jerusalem could put any hope in him.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, tremble as you eat your food, and shudder in fear as you drink your water. Say to the people of the land: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says about those living in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel: They will eat their food in anxiety and drink their water in despair, for their land will be stripped of everything in it because of the violence of all who live there. The inhabited towns will be laid waste and the land will be desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 12:17-20

THE FEARFUL MEAL

Again, see the prophet acting out this strange act. Try eating and drinking whilst shaking and trembling like this and see the food and drink spilling all over the place, what a vivid sign. Here are how the people in Jerusalem will be. They will be in terror of what is coming upon them. They will be quaking and trembling when they realise this is really happening to them.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, what is this proverb you have in the land of Israel: ‘The days go by and every vision comes to nothing’? Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to put an end to this proverb, and they will no longer quote it in Israel.’ Say to them, ‘The days are near when every vision will be fulfilled. For there will be no more false visions or flattering divinations among the people of Israel. But I the LORD will speak what I will, and it shall be fulfilled without delay. For in your days, you rebellious people, I will fulfil whatever I say, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, the Israelites are saying, ‘The vision he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies about the distant future.’ ‘Therefore, say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 12:21-28

TWO PROVERBS CORRECTED

The first says this, ‘They-lengthen the days and it dies every vision’. Four words in Hebrew. God’s answer to that is a play on those 4 words. He says, ‘they draw near the days and the word of every vision’.

God is going to put an end to this proverb, as he will others. Their proverb is saying, it will never happen. All this that Ezekiel and Jeremiah and maybe others are saying will never happen, and even if it does it will be a long way off, it will never affect us.

God's answer, it is at hand. At hand means near. By definition at hand must refer to something near. **Revelation 1:3 / Revelation 22:10 / Mark 1:15.** etc.

The second proverb is like the first. Even if it is true, it's a long way off. It is for tomorrow, for the next generation, not for us. God says no. This prophecy will not be delayed. In your days, in their generation, they will be fulfilled. **Mark 9:1 / Mark 13:30.**

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

AGAINST THE FALSE PROPHETS AND PROPHETESSES

Against the false prophets. Ezekiel 13:1-16.

Their conduct. Ezekiel 13:1-7.

Their punishment. Ezekiel 13:8-16.

Against the false prophetesses. Ezekiel 13:17-23.

Their conduct. Ezekiel 13:17-19.

Their punishment. Ezekiel 13:20-23.

SUMMARY

The condemnation of false prophets and false prophetesses. One of the primary reasons that people have so little confidence in God's word, is that many false messages are being preached by those pretending to be men of God. Over the centuries there will be no end to such men.

Therefore, God calls Ezekiel to speak out against the false prophets and prophetesses, who are deceiving Judah into believing their captivity will soon end with a swift victory over Babylonia.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: 'Hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! Your prophets, Israel, are like jackals among ruins. You have not gone up to the breaches in the wall to repair it for the people of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the LORD. Their visions are false and their divinations a lie. Even though the LORD has not sent them, they say, 'The LORD declares,' and expect him to fulfil their words. Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations when you say, 'The LORD declares,' though I have not spoken?

‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because of your false words and lying visions, I am against you, declares the Sovereign LORD. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council of my people or be listed in the records of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD. ‘Because they lead my people astray, saying, ‘Peace,’ when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash, therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall. Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones hurtling down, and violent winds will burst forth. When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, ‘Where is the whitewash you covered it with?’ ‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury. I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you will be destroyed in it; and you will know that I am the LORD. So, I will pour out my wrath against the wall and against those who covered it with whitewash. I will say to you, ‘The wall is gone and so are those who whitewashed it, those prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her when there was no peace, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 13:1-16

THE DECEIT OF FALSE PROPHETS

It is easy for us looking back to differentiate between the true prophet and the lying one. But for those living in that time, I don’t think it would have been quite so easy. We as usual can be wise after the event; they could not. This chapter serves to help the people in exile see that Ezekiel is not misleading them although some others may have tried.

The message of the false prophets is, ‘Peace’. The problem with the message is that there is to be no peace. The origin of what they say is clearly outlined for us.

It comes out of their own minds, Ezekiel 13:2.

They have never had a vision, Ezekiel 13:3. 1 Samuel 9:9.

They delude themselves with their lies, Ezekiel 13:6-7.

There is a clear impression given here that not only do they convince the people with their lies and false statements, but they believe that what they are saying is true. They are sincere men, of course, they are sincerely wrong.

God is clearly against these men, regardless of their sincerity. That isn’t enough if it is based on lies. Hananiah whom we have seen before is a good example of who is talked about in this chapter. **Jeremiah 28.**

An example is given of the type of thing in which these false prophets were involved:

A wall is built, seemingly by the leaders, by the political leaders. The prophets paint it with whitewash. But the wall falls; it disappears along with those who did the whitewashing. What’s happening here?

The leaders promote a scheme, ‘What we need to do is a rebel and get some help from Egypt’, **Jeremiah 37:5-10.** These false prophets then back it to the kilt and give God’s blessing on it. With fine words and eloquent preaching, they support the political whims of the day. But God is going to destroy the wall and the whitewashers with it.

‘The uselessness of the whole activity of these prophets could not be more vividly described. The whitewashing of the wall may hide its defects but will not prevent its destruction; and when the wall of Jerusalem’s shaky prosperity tumbles down, those who did so little to build and so much to deceive shall be overwhelmed with confusion.’ The Book of Ezekiel, John Skinner.

They and their schemes are doomed.

‘Now, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own imagination. Prophesy against them and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the women who sew magic charms

on all their wrists and make veils of various lengths for their heads in order to ensnare people. Will you ensnare the lives of my people but preserve your own? You have profaned me among my people for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread. By lying to my people, who listen to lies, you have killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should not live. 'Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against your magic charms with which you ensnare people like birds and I will tear them from your arms; I will set free the people that you ensnare like birds. I will tear off your veils and save my people from your hands, and they will no longer fall prey to your power. Then you will know that I am the LORD. Because you disheartened the righteous with your lies, when I had brought them no grief, and because you encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways and so save their lives, therefore you will no longer see false visions or practice divination. I will save my people from your hands. And then you will know that I am the LORD.' Ezekiel 13:17-23

THE SIN OF THE FALSE PROPHETESSES

There is no specific message from these ladies, but the thrust of what they say and do is the same, lies. These women would be described today as sorceresses. They are all dressed up to act the part, like the Gipsy fortune teller. They make veils for everyone, no matter what size you are they can give you one which will stop anything ever happening to you. This one will protect you from any Babylonian spear.

They are described as hunting for souls and keeping souls alive. The point is clear, that they seek out and foster people for their own gain. They will do anything, say anything, and promise anything in order to line their own pockets. The extreme of this is even to the point of getting rid of some righteous prophet who might just speak out too much against their lucrative business. **Jeremiah 26:8 / Jeremiah 26:20-23.**

The problem with these prophetesses and the prophets of course was that they were justifying the wicked and disheartening the righteous. That was the wrong way round for a prophet of God to act. These ladies would receive their just reward from God.

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

THE ATTITUDE OF GOD TOWARDS THE WORSHIPPERS OF IDOLS, AND CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT

The Lord gives no answer to the idolaters. **Ezekiel 14:1-11.**

Elders with idols in their hearts. **Ezekiel 14:1-5.**

The Divine threat, and summons to repent. **Ezekiel 14:6-8.**

No prophet is to give any other answer. **Ezekiel 14:9-11.**

The righteousness of the godly will not avert judgment. **Ezekiel 14:12-23.**

Righteousness can only save the individual. Ezekiel 14:12-20.

This rule applied to Jerusalem. Ezekiel 14:21-23.

SUMMARY

Israel's leaders have idols in their hearts. Ezekiel is shown that God is only doing what He must. One irony of the people's continued idolatry is their practice of seeking God's will from the prophets.

They are fascinated and allured by the various idols they have set up in their hearts, but deep down in those same hearts, there is evidently the realisation that only a much greater God can provide the real answers to life. Yet God considers their dual allegiance an affront and orders Ezekiel not to accommodate their curiosity.

‘Some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me. Then the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all? Therefore, speak to them and tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When any of the Israelites set up idols in their hearts and put a wicked stumbling block before their faces and then go to a prophet, I the LORD will answer them myself in keeping with their great idolatry. I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.’ ‘Therefore, say to the people of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices! ‘When any of the Israelites or any foreigner residing in Israel separate themselves from me and set up idols in their hearts and put a wicked stumbling block before their faces and then go to a prophet to inquire of me, I the LORD will answer them myself. I will set my face against them and make them an example and a byword. I will remove them from my people. Then you will know that I am the LORD. ‘And if the prophet is enticed to utter a prophecy, I the LORD have enticed that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and destroy him from among my people Israel. They will bear their guilt—the prophet will be as guilty as the one who consults him. Then the people of Israel will no longer stray from me, nor will they defile themselves anymore with all their sins. They will be my people, and I will be their God, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 14:1-11

THE VISIT OF THE ELDERS

Perhaps the same group of elders who came in **Ezekiel 8:1ff**. These were perhaps some of the ‘best’ elders Judah had. Nebuchadnezzar had taken the cream captive in 606 and 597 B.C. Ezekiel saw before him men who were well respected, but God saw they had idols in their hearts. Idols, in their hearts, show the relationship these elders had with idolatry. They may not outwardly show idolatrous practices, but they had an intimate relationship with them. These men come to ask God for His will.

‘No greater insult can be offered to God than for the man who offers Him no allegiance, or at best a divided one, which He will not accept, to come to His prophet and to ask to know His will, which he will only do if it suits him. He may do it to seem respectable in the eyes of man, or out of superstition, or just because it is customary.’ Ezekiel: The Man and His Message. H. L. Ellison.

The prophet's word to them will of course be from God, the ultimate word for them was the destruction of Jerusalem. But again, the prophet is given the message of warning to all, to remove their idolatry, outward and inward. There is here too, a warning to Ezekiel that he will be punished too if he tries to comfort the people with lies. He knows the true message from God, he must speak it or expect the same judgement. **Ezekiel 14:9ff**.

How many righteous people does it take to save a nation?

It has been 1500 years since Abram asked that question about Sodom and Gomorrah. Surely at this time, there are righteous believers among both the captives and their Jerusalem kinsmen, who are asking the same question themselves.

God's answer to Ezekiel is that there comes a time when a nation sins so completely condemns them that not even a remnant of righteous citizens can stop the destruction of inherent evil. God uses as his illustration of a righteous remnant a trio of faithful believers. Noah who saw all mankind, except his own family, destroyed by the great flood.

Job the patient patriarch. Daniel, possibly the Daniel who is in captivity in Babylon and serving in Nebuchadnezzar's palace, who will distinguish himself even more than he already has.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its people and their animals, even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD. 'Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate. 'Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, 'Let the sword pass throughout the land,' and I kill its people and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved. 'Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath on it through bloodshed, killing its people and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness. 'For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments—sword and famine and wild beasts and plague—to kill its men and their animals! Yet there will be some survivors—sons and daughters who will be brought out of it. They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be consoled regarding the disaster I have brought on Jerusalem—every disaster I have brought on it. You will be consoled when you see their conduct and their actions, for you will know that I have done nothing in it without cause, declares the Sovereign LORD. Ezekiel 14:12-23

JUDGMENT INESCAPABLE

This message from God seems to be primarily to Ezekiel. The prophet is not convinced that such a harsh judgement is due to his people.

Does God deceive the prophet? **2 Thessalonians 2:11**. God allows them to follow their own wiles, their sin is so great. God tells the prophet that he will only send one judgement on a people when it is absolutely necessary.

There is so little righteousness in the land that these 3 righteous men could not avert the judgement. He will give four examples of this, famine **Ezekiel 14:13f**, wild beasts **Ezekiel 14:15f**, a sword **Ezekiel 14:17f**, pestilence **Ezekiel 14:19f**.

For each one of these judgements, Noah, Daniel, and Job's righteousness would not be enough to avert that judgement. So, he says, how much more will that be true if God sends his four sore judgements on the land. This small amount of righteousness not being able to save a nation is seen in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham's interceding for the 50 then eventually 10 righteous is the same principle. Lot's righteousness was not enough to save Sodom. From the hypothetical land receiving one judgement from God, the prophet is now shown this in relation to Jerusalem.

'If a land is ravaged by any one of these sore judgements what should one realise? That the nation is too sinful to be permitted to get away with it. And what if all of the four sore judgements fell on a land? That would mean the land

was utterly incorrigible and beyond salvation without radical purging. Well, this is exactly the position that Jerusalem was in.’ The book of Ezekiel. J. McGuiggan.

So, the four sore judgements are coming on Jerusalem:

1. Sword
2. Famine
3. Evil beasts
4. Pestilence.

Ezekiel is told in closing, that the remnant from the destroyed city would prove God’s case. The prophet would see in them the characteristics that demanded such judgement.

Note, Noah, Daniel, and Job. Why these 3 are chosen seems unclear. The three together vouch for their historicity, of which Daniel’s and Job’s have been doubted.

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

Two allegories teach Jerusalem’s ripeness for judgment. Ezekiel 15-16.

Jerusalem, the useless wood of a wild vine, Israel has no superiority over the nations to save it from destruction. Ezekiel 15:1-8.

SUMMARY

PARABLE OF THE USELESS VINE

Using three allegories, God foretells Judah’s imminent destruction. The first allegory shows Judah as a useless vine to be burned. The second is a vitriolic attack against Judah’s unfaithfulness, portraying Judah as an adulterous wife, worse than her two sisters, Israel and Edom, and less moral than a prostitute. The third allegory, using two eagles and a vine, calls specific attention to the personal ruin of King Zedekiah.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, how is the wood of a vine different from that of a branch from any of the trees in the forest? Is wood ever taken from it to make anything useful? Do they make pegs from it to hang things on? And after it is thrown on the fire as fuel and the fire burns both ends and chars the middle, is it then useful for anything? If it was not useful for anything when it was whole, how much less can it be made into something useful when the fire has burned it and it is charred?’ Ezekiel 15:1-5

THE EXAMPLE OF THE USELESS VINE

Note that the emphasis of the example is on the wood rather than the fruit. He is not asking what use is the vine, but of what use is the wood of the vine. Nothing is made from it. Not even a peg to hang a jug or picture on. It is useless. That is before it is burned. So how much more useless will it be after it has been burned. The fire consuming both ends, and the middle signifies that it is totally burned.

‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As I have given the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest as fuel for the fire, so will I treat the people living in Jerusalem. I will set my face against them. Although they have come out of the fire, the fire will yet consume them. And when I set my face against them, you will know that I am the LORD. I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 15:6-8

This is now applied to Jerusalem. She is the wood of the vine. The inhabitants of Jerusalem will be put through the fire – judgement, destruction.

In verse 7 some have escaped from the fire and yet they will be put through the fire. This is probably referring to the 597 B.C. fire from which they had escaped.

The present inhabitants of Jerusalem had come through that, but they are being told there is going to be a 586 B.C. fire which they will not escape from.

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

THE FOUNDLING CHILD, INGRATITUDE AND UNFAITHFULNESS OF JERUSALEM

Israel are found, unclean, miserable, and near to destruction. Ezekiel 16:1-5.

Israel, therefore, owes its preservation and exaltation to honour and glory to the Lord its God alone. Ezekiel 16:8-14.

The apostasy of Israel. Ezekiel 16:15-34.

Its origin and nature. Ezekiel 16:15-22.

Its magnitude and extent. Ezekiel 16:23-34.

The punishment will correspond to the sin. Ezekiel 16:35-43.

The judgment is perfectly just. Ezekiel 16:44-52.

Disgrace will not be the conclusion; Israel will attain to the glory promised to the people of God. Ezekiel 16:53-63.

SUMMARY:

Similar to Hosea 2:14-20. Figurative resume of Israel's history. We see the undeserved kindness shown by God. Jerusalem makes Sodom and Samaria look righteous. A promise of reconciliation.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. ‘Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, ‘Live!’ I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew and developed and entered puberty. Your breasts had formed, and your hair had grown, yet you were stark naked. ‘Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. ‘I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put sandals of fine leather on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. I adorned you with jewellery: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. So, you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was honey, olive oil and the finest flour. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendour I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 16:1-14

THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE OR UNWANTED FOUNDLING

In these opening verses, we get a good picture of how the Lord went out of his way to help Israel. She is like a baby left at birth to die until God comes along and gives her what she needs. From the very beginning, it was God who supplied Israel with what she needed. They were not literally descended from the Hittites and Amorites. This is probably referring to their ‘spiritual or moral pedigree’. **John 8:44-45**.

Note, that we are not dealing with historical reality in this chapter, but figurative reasoning. The physical is used to express a spiritual sickness.

‘He (Ezekiel) makes no effort to make the details of his story tie-up with the details of the Patriarchal period. He is concerned to give a general spiritual picture, not the outward historical one.’ Ellison.

Having reached maturity, God then enters into a marriage covenant with her. **Ruth 3:9**. Once again we see that all the adornment of the new bride is supplied by the groom, God. Again, we see that if this is a literal picture, we have the problem of God marrying an adopted daughter. But we are again working in figurative language where we are not bound by literal problems.

‘But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favours on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his. You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. You went to him, and he possessed your beauty. You also took the fine jewellery I gave you, the jewellery made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them. And you took your embroidered clothes to put on them, and you offered my oil and incense before them. Also, the food I provided for you—the flour, olive oil and honey I gave you to eat—you offered as fragrant incense before them. That is what happened, declares the Sovereign LORD. ‘And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols. In all your detestable practices and your prostitution, you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, kicking about in your blood. ‘Woe! Woe to you, declares the Sovereign

LORD. In addition to all your other wickedness, you built a mound for yourself and made a lofty shrine in every public square. At every street corner you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, spreading your legs with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your neighbours with large genitals, and aroused my anger with your increasing promiscuity. So, I stretched out my hand against you and reduced your territory; I gave you over to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were shocked by your lewd conduct. You engaged in prostitution with the Assyrians too, because you were insatiable; and even after that, you still were not satisfied. Then you increased your promiscuity to include Babylonia, a land of merchants, but even with this you were not satisfied. 'I am filled with fury against you, declares the Sovereign LORD, when you do all these things, acting like a brazen prostitute! When you built your mounds at every street corner and made your lofty shrines in every public square, you were unlike a prostitute, because you scorned payment. 'You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband! All prostitutes receive gifts, but you give gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from everywhere for your illicit favours. So, in your prostitution you are the opposite of others; no one runs after you for your favours. You are the very opposite, for you give payment and none is given to you.' Ezekiel 16:15-34

INEXCUSABLE INFIDELITY. THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE

Having gotten all she needed from her husband, having entered into a marriage covenant with him, the wife now is shown to have committed adultery. We see first:

Her harlotry with her lovers. He is shown to lavish all the goods given her by her husband on anyone who passes by. Three lovers are specified; Egyptians, verse 26. Assyrians verse 28. Babylonians verse 29. This harlotry is of course a figurative thing and seems to represent the alliances they made with these nations and the gods of these nations. Here is where they were unfaithful as a wife to God.

They committed adultery by going after other gods. So much so that even the Philistines, a thoroughly bad lot, were ashamed of her. But even more; Israel did not act as other harlots receiving pay for their wares. She paid her lovers, verses 33-34.

'The adulteress may by some be excused by the strength of passion and blind love, but for a harlot, there is no excuse except that of stark necessity. But for Israel, there is not even this excuse. She has not been paid by her lovers but has paid those that have taken their pleasure of her.' Ellison.

'Therefore, you prostitute, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you poured out your lust and exposed your naked body in your promiscuity with your lovers, and because of all your detestable idols, and because you gave them your children's blood, therefore I am going to gather all your lovers, with whom you found pleasure, those you loved as well as those you hated. I will gather them against you from all around and will strip you in front of them, and they will see you stark naked. I will sentence you to the punishment of women who commit adultery and who shed blood; I will bring on you the blood vengeance of my wrath and jealous anger. Then I will deliver you into the hands of your lovers, and they will tear down your mounds and destroy your lofty shrines. They will strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewellery and leave you stark naked. They will bring a mob against you, who will stone you and hack you to pieces with their swords. They will burn down your houses and inflict punishment on you in the sight of many women. I will put a stop to your prostitution, and you will no longer pay your lovers. Then my wrath against you will subside and my jealous anger will turn away from you; I will be calm and no longer angry.' Ezekiel 16:35-43

We see second; Her punishment for prostitution. The picture is given of her lovers turning on her. A vivid self-explanatory passage.

‘Because you did not remember the days of your youth but enraged me with all these things, I will surely bring down on your head what you have done, declares the Sovereign LORD. Did you not add lewdness to all your other detestable practices? ‘Everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb about you: ‘Like mother, like daughter.’ You are a true daughter of your mother, who despised her husband and her children; and you are a true sister of your sisters, who despised their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. Your older sister was Samaria, who lived to the north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you with her daughters, was Sodom. You not only followed their ways and copied their detestable practices, but in all your ways you soon became more depraved than they. As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done. ‘Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore, I did away with them as you have seen. Samaria did not commit half the sins you did. You have done more detestable things than they and have made your sisters seem righteous by all these things you have done. Bear your disgrace, for you have furnished some justification for your sisters. Because your sins were more vile than theirs, they appear more righteous than you. So then, be ashamed and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous. ‘However, I will restore the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and of Samaria and her daughters, and your fortunes along with them, so that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all you have done in giving them comfort. And your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to what they were before; and you and your daughters will return to what you were before. You would not even mention your sister Sodom in the day of your pride, before your wickedness was uncovered. Even so, you are now scorned by the daughters of Edom and all her neighbours and the daughters of the Philistines—all those around you who despise you. You will bear the consequences of your lewdness and your detestable practices, declares the LORD. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant.’ Ezekiel 16:44-59

We see third; How far this once pure bride has stooped. The point is to show Judah how sinful they are, and several points are made to prove it. Again, we are shown their moral and spiritual pedigree:

MOTHER. A HITTITE.

OLDER SISTER. SAMARIA.

YOUNGER SISTER. SODOM.

Was this literally true? No. Again see **John 8:44**.

Samaria and Sodom were symbols of sinfulness and wickedness, yet God says that Judah is worse than both of them. Judah was so bad she made Samaria and Sodom look good. Now if the less wicked Samaria and Sodom had been judged, and they had, then what was going to happen to Judah. She will be judged in like manner.

But had Judah been punished at this point? No, so do the people that minimized their sin in their own eyes.

For if they were as bad as God was saying, they would have been judged by now.

Further, was God going to bring them up again, after he had judged them? Again, with an affirmative answer, the people reasoned that they could not have been as bad as the two.

So, to show that they were as bad and because God was going to restore Judah, in the figure he raises up Sodom and Samaria again that Judah might see how bad they were. God was not and is not going to literally raise up Sodom and Samaria again. **Jude 7.**

Why does Judah have a remnant?

By the mercy of God, not because they deserve it by being less wicked or even righteous. **Isaiah 1:9 / Romans 9:27-29.**

Note, that Judah is worse than Sodom and Samaria. Was Judah's sin worse than the other two?

Although that could be argued either way, it is true to say that Judah should have known better because they knew more. So, in that sense, Judah had the greater sin, **John 19:11.**

‘Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both those who are older than you and those who are younger. I will give them to you as daughters, but not on the basis of my covenant with you. So, I will establish my covenant with you, and you will know that I am the LORD. Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ **Ezekiel 16:60-63**

God's mercy in Reconciliation. One word can be written over this section which describes the renewal of the covenant, GRACE.

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION OF THE DAVIDIC FAMILY, THE DISLOYALTY OF ZEDEKIAH, THE CONSEQUENCES

The Parable. **Ezekiel 17:1-10.**

The interpretation and application to king Zedekiah. **Ezekiel 17:11-21.**

The promise of the Messianic kingdom, the planting of the true twig of the stem of David. **Ezekiel 17:22-24.**

SUMMARY

The allegory of the eagles. The allegory is interpreted. A Messianic promise.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, set forth an allegory and tell it to the Israelites as a parable. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: A great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage of varied colours came to Lebanon. Taking hold of the top of a cedar, he broke off its topmost shoot and carried it away

to a land of merchants, where he planted it in a city of traders. ‘He took one of the seedlings of the land and put it in fertile soil. He planted it like a willow by abundant water, and it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine. Its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So, it became a vine and produced branches and put out leafy boughs. Ezekiel 17:1-6

THE FIRST EAGLE

This is a riddle, allegory or parable. The Hebrew, ‘masal’ could be either or all. Difficult to differentiate.

First eagle, Babylon

Lebanon, Judah

Cedar, Royalty, particularly Jehoiachin.

Seed, Zedekiah

Willow, speaks of a weak kingdom. Zedekiah as a puppet king.

This interpretation is given later in the chapter in Ezekiel 17:11f.

‘But there was another great eagle with powerful wings and full plumage. The vine now sent out its roots toward him from the plot where it was planted and stretched out its branches to him for water. It had been planted in good soil by abundant water so that it would produce branches, bear fruit and become a splendid vine.’ ‘Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Will it thrive? Will it not be uprooted and stripped of its fruit so that it withers? All its new growth will wither. It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it up by the roots. It has been planted, but will it thrive? Will it not wither completely when the east wind strikes it—wither away in the plot where it grew?’

Ezekiel 17:7-10

THE SECOND EAGLE

Second eagle, Egypt Vine.

Judah under Zedekiah.

This interpretation again is given in Ezekiel 17:15f.

‘Then the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Say to this rebellious people, ‘Do you not know what these things mean?’ Say to them: ‘The king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and carried off her king and her nobles, bringing them back with him to Babylon. Then he took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him, putting him under oath. He also carried away the leading men of the land, so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to rise again, surviving only by keeping his treaty. But the king rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt to get horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Will he break the treaty and yet escape?’ ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, he shall die in Babylon, in the land of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose treaty he broke. Pharaoh with his mighty army and great horde will be of no help to him in war, when ramps are built, and siege works erected to destroy many lives. He despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Because he had given his hand in pledge and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. ‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As surely as I live, I will repay him for despising my oath and breaking my covenant. I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because he was unfaithful to me. All his choice troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken.’ Ezekiel 17:11-21

THE INTERPRETATION

This is an account of what has happened in Judah and what will happen. Babylon has removed the royal and influential people. Jehoiachin has been taken to Babylon and Zedekiah has been left in his place deliberately placed in a weak kingdom as a puppet king. But Zedekiah rebelled and sought help from Egypt. However, the army of Egypt will not be able to help Judah on this occasion.

This is a picture of the treachery of Zedekiah, who will end up a captive in Babylon and his troops and supporters will be similarly judged. Note, the characteristics of the two eagles. Babylon's eagle is shown as grand, colourful and powerful. But Egypt lacks the power. It is all show. The first eagle has the pinions the power, the second does not.

Also, see the reason for Zedekiah's individual punishment. He broke the oath made to the king of Babylon. **Ezekiel 17:17**. He clearly despised it and broke it according to verse 18. Then we discover that God calls it 'my oath' and 'my covenant'. Zedekiah had brought God into the covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. **2 Chronicles 36:13**.

He made the mistake of breaking a personal covenant with God. Throughout the Bible, we see how important covenants or oaths are to God. **Amos 1:9ff / Deuteronomy 28:15ff / Hebrews 10:19-31**.

'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain heights of Israel, I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. All the trees of the forest will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. 'I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.' **Ezekiel 17:22-24**

GOD THE THIRD EAGLE

Though God does not call himself an eagle, he takes the part the other two eagles have played in **Ezekiel 17:1-10**. He takes a small twig from the most tender part of the tree and places it on the highest point of the mountain. It is one of the royal lines to be established in Judah.

See the smallness of the twig and the harshness of the grounds. The top of the mountain has the weakest soil and it receives the strongest of winds, but God plants it so it will not only survive but grow vigorously.

Why? Because God wants it to. This is a Messianic prophecy. For after Zedekiah there was no royal one until Jesus.

See how the Babylonian eagle planted the twig and planted it in good soil with plenty of water, but it did not grow.

God did not want the kingdom under Zedekiah to flourish, but it was different under king Jesus. **Isaiah 53:2**.

God says that glory will be restored to the Davidic line through Jesus.

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

MORAL FREEDOM AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The proverb and word of God. Every man to bear his own sins. Ezekiel 18:1-4.

The righteous man shall not die. Ezekiel 18:5-9.

The righteousness of the father does not protect the wicked son. Ezekiel 18:10-13.

Each bears his own righteousness or sin. Ezekiel 18:14-20.

Turning to good leads to life; Turning to evil to death. Ezekiel 18:21-24.

Another earnest call to repentance. Ezekiel 18:25-32.

SUMMARY

The proverb circulating in Jerusalem. God's answer: The individual's responsibility to God. The individual's ability to change his ways. It is only natural in times of pending punishment to place the blame on others, to hide behind prior good conduct, or perhaps to take security in one's family or heritage.

God discredits any idea that the people of Judah are only suffering because of their predecessor's sins, or that they claim immunity as descendants of faithful forefathers such as Abraham. No, each person is accountable for his own sins, says Ezekiel, and God assures his people that just as the wicked can repent and be saved, the righteous can fall into sin and be destroyed.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?' 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die. Ezekiel 18:1-4

THE LAW OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

This chapter arises from a proverb spoken amongst the people.

'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?' The simple meaning of this proverb is that the children are directly affected or suffering because of the previous generation. The teaching which follows shows us that the people were saying that they were being punished for the sins of a past generation.

Jeremiah 31:29 shows us that this was a proverb well known in Jerusalem as well as in Telabib.

The background for this is Manasseh. We recall 2 Kings 21:10-15, the proclamation by God that Judah would be exiled. 2 Kings 21:10-18 / 2 Kings 23:26-27 / 2 Chronicles 33:10ff. Basically, they are thinking, Manasseh was wicked, for which God promised he would exile and destroy the nation. However, Manasseh was forgiven because of his change of heart, but the sentence was still going to be carried out.

Hear the people crying, 'It isn't fair!' God's answer will be that they are not being punished for the sin of Manasseh, but their own sin. Each soul will die because of his own sin. To prove this God will use 5 examples to show the people he is acting fairly and justly.

Note, that this was not a new teaching. The prophets seldom brought new teaching but directed the people back to the law. God had said it before. **Deuteronomy 24:16.**

‘Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbour’s wife or have sexual relations with a woman during her period. He does not oppress anyone but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He does not lend to them at interest or take a profit from them. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between two parties. He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 18:5-9

EXAMPLE 1

Here is described a righteous man. God has described him as righteous and does so in terms of the law. This man’s desire is to keep the law. He is the first generation in the example.

‘He shall surely live’. Ellison suggests that this chapter can only refer to the immediate context of Babylonian captivity. That those of the exiles who are righteous will live and those who are not, will die. A weeding out of the remnant he calls it.

But that is hard to accept, for not all the unrighteous attitudes were cleansed by exile. A quick glance at Ezra and Haggai will prove that. No, this is talking about spiritual life and death, **Ezekiel 18:18.**

‘Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things (though the father has done none of them): ‘He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbour’s wife. He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things. He lends at interest and takes a profit. Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.’ Ezekiel 18:10-13

EXAMPLE 2

This righteous man’s son is wicked, he shall die. Again, this wickedness is described in terms of lawbreaking. This man chooses to go against God, it is his choice to rebel. So, the first-generation lives, and the second generation dies.

‘But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things: ‘He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbour’s wife. He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He withholds his hand from mistreating the poor and takes no interest or profit from them. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father’s sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people. ‘Yet you ask, ‘Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?’ Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them. Ezekiel 18:14-20

EXAMPLE 3

Now, this wicked man has a righteous son, he shall live. He like his grandfather will live, but not because of his grandfather's righteousness, but his own. The third-generation lives. Just to remind them of what he is teaching, the prophet repeats his message. One generation will not be punished for the sins of another.

‘But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die. None of the offenses they have committed will be remembered against them. Because of the righteous things they have done, they will live. Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?’ Ezekiel 18:21-23

EXAMPLE 4

The wicked man who repents shall live. This is Manasseh. All the sins that had been committed were wiped away, not one remaining. Here is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Verse 23 is echoed in **1 Timothy 2:4** / **2 Peter 3:9**.

The New Testament often simply repeats what God has already said about himself in the Old Testament, but we are sometimes inclined to think they are new concepts.

‘But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die.’ Ezekiel 18:24

EXAMPLE 5

The righteous man who turns away shall die. The opposite of example 4. His former acts of obedience will not save him, no matter how much they had been. The rebellion will condemn him.

‘For one thing, the individual cannot today be held personally responsible for the presence of evil within his own heart, as he has inherited the fatal seed from his forefathers.’ The Redemption of Man. John MacDonald.

‘Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear, you Israelites: Is my way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust? If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin, they will die for it; because of the sin they have committed they will die. But if a wicked person turns away from the wickedness they have committed and does what is just and right, they will save their life. Because they consider all the offenses they have committed and turn away from them, that person will surely live; they will not die. Yet the Israelites say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Are my ways unjust, people of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust? ‘Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!’ Ezekiel 18:25-32

Here God sums up his argument and proves that he is a just God. The people are questioning his justice in this matter of course. The way out for them to escape what is being promised to them is repentance. Calvinism, the doctrine of limited atonement or particular redemption has a problem here. The following are random quotes from ‘The Five Points of Calvinism’ by W.J. Seaton.

‘If, however, some men and women are raised out of their spiritual death, ‘born again’ as John’s Gospel puts it, and since they are unable to perform this work for themselves, then we must conclude that it was God who raised them.

On the other hand, as many men and women are not ‘made alive’, we must likewise conclude that that is because God has not raised them. If man is unable to save himself on account of the Fall in Adam being a total fall, and if God alone can save, and if all are not saved, then the conclusion must be that God has not chosen to save all, Christ died positively and effectually to save a certain number of hell-deserving sinners on whom the Father had already set His free electing love.’

Whichever way you turn that around it says that God has pleasure in the death of some sinners. God says, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of any one’. **Ephesians 2:1ff.**

Three aspects of God’s character:

1. God’s love. **Ezekiel 18:32.** ‘I have no pleasure in the death of any one’. **2 Peter 3:9**
2. God’s mercy. **Ezekiel 18:21.** ‘If a wicked man turns, He shall live.’
3. God’s justice. **Ezekiel 18:4 / Ezekiel 18:20.** ‘The soul that sins shall die.’

Finally, there is a message of hope here for us. We can change our lives with the help of God. The Gospel can change people. How we have been brought up and our habits of life can change.

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

LAMENTATION OVER THE FALL OF JUDAH AND FOR THE PRINCES OF ISRAEL

Capture and exile of the princes. **Ezekiel 19:1-9.**

Destruction of the kingdom, and banishment of the people. **Ezekiel 19:10-14.**

SUMMARY

Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin were both taken into captivity. This will also happen to Zedekiah. As a lasting reminder of how the wicked are brought down, Ezekiel writes a lament for two of Judah’s kings who were taken by Judah’s oppressors. It has been some 17 years since Pharaoh Neco led king Jehoahaz away to captivity in Egypt. It has been some six years since Nebuchadnezzar brought a subdued king Jehoiakim to Babylonia. Their capture and exile are witnesses to Judah’s vulnerability to God’s judgment.

‘Take up a lament concerning the princes of Israel and say: ‘What a lioness was your mother among the lions! She lay down among them and reared her cubs. She brought up one of her cubs, and he became a strong lion. He learned to tear the prey and he became a man-eater. The nations heard about him, and he was trapped in their pit. They led him with hooks to the land of Egypt.’ **Ezekiel 19:1-4**

THE FIRST LION

Here is a lamentation, Hebrew, 'qina', a dirge, or funeral song. It is a funeral song concerning the royal family of Judah, **Genesis 49:4 / Micah 5:8**. The kings of Judah sat on thrones decorated with lions **1 Kings 10:18-20**. The lion was part of royal symbolism, **Proverbs 19:12 / Proverbs 20:2 / 2 Samuel 1:23**.

Note also the seal of Shema, servant of Jeroboam, decorated with a royal lion, found at Megiddo, and the seal of Jotham from Ezion Geber, bearing the royal lion. The lioness is the royal family with lions, kings, coming out of her. The lioness is the womb from which comes the seed. One of her whelps grows up and learns to be king.

The first lion then is Jehoahaz. He is taken with hooks, captivity, to Egypt. **2 Chronicles 36:1ff / 2 Kings 23:30-34**. Pharaoh Neco took him to Egypt. He was the first and only king of Judah to go captive to Egypt.

'When she saw her hope unfulfilled, her expectation gone, she took another of her cubs and made him a strong lion. He prowled among the lions, for he was now a strong lion. He learned to tear the prey and he became a man-eater. He broke down their strongholds and devastated their towns. The land and all who were in it were terrified by his roaring. Then the nations came against him, those from regions round about. They spread their net for him, and he was trapped in their pit. With hooks they pulled him into a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon. They put him in prison, so his roar was heard no longer on the mountains of Israel.' **Ezekiel 19:5-9**

THE SECOND LION

The next king is Jehoiakim, but this is not him, for this king was taken captive to Babylon. Jehoiachin is the second lion. Why miss out Jehoiakim?

Jehoiakim was missed out here because they never mourned his death. Jeremiah encourages no mourning for him. **Jeremiah 22:18**.

He was hated by most of the people, and so in a passage on lamentation for their kings, Jehoiakim would not be included. **2 Chronicles 36:6 / Daniel 1:2**, he died in Jerusalem, **2 Kings 24:1-6**. We see in this a compression of historic time. So, the second lion was also taken captive, this time to Babylon. This is a Lament and is to be used as a lament.

'Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard planted by the water; it was fruitful and full of branches because of abundant water. Its branches were strong, fit for a ruler's sceptre. It towered high above the thick foliage, conspicuous for its height and for its many branches. But it was uprooted in fury and thrown to the ground. The east wind made it shrivel, it was stripped of its fruit; its strong branches withered, and fire consumed them. Now it is planted in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land. Fire spread from one of its main branches and consumed its fruit. No strong branch is left on it fit for a ruler's sceptre.' 'This is a lament and is to be used as a lament.' **Ezekiel 19:10-14**

HERE IS ZEDEKIAH

The last king of the line. Here the figure changes from a lioness to a vine. From the vine comes a stem, Zedekiah. But what happens to the stem? It is plucked up, dried up and burnt out.

Note that the fire which did the consuming originated from the stem itself. So, the rulers in Judah were causing the problems.

The people were trusting in the ruler. They had a descendant of David on the throne, so everything was fine. But it was he who would be instrumental in causing the downfall.

This is a reference to the tragedy of 586, and Zedekiah, although it has also been assumed that the stem is an allusion to Jehoiachin.

Also, the vine is associated with Judah in **Genesis 49:11-12**, on a panel from a synagogue at Dura, third century A.D. The lion and vine symbolism is based on this chapter.

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF ISRAEL

Judah's persistent rebellion. Ezekiel 20:1-32.

Date, occasion, and theme of the discourse to follow. Ezekiel 20:1-3.

Election of Israel in Egypt. Its resistance to the commandments of God. Ezekiel 20:1-3.

The behaviour of Israel in the wilderness. Ezekiel 20:4-9.

The generation that grew up in the wilderness. Ezekiel 20:18-26.

Israel committed these sins in Canaan also, and to this day; therefore, God will not allow the idolatrous generation to inquire of Him. Ezekiel 20:27-32.

Chastisement followed by restoration. Ezekiel 20:33-44.

The judgment awaiting Israel of purification among the heathen. Ezekiel 20:33-39.

The ultimate gathering of Israel, and its conversion. Ezekiel 20:40-44.

SUMMARY

Ezekiel gives the elders a review of their history. Their idolatry is bringing the judgement. In the following year, 590 B.C. God once again chastises Israel, citing the long history of rebellion, and his repeated reluctance to bring about their ultimate punishment against them. He reminds Israel that they continue to be as sinful as their father, but that a day is coming when God's chosen ones will be obedient and holy people.

In the Hebrew Bible, the chapter consists of 1-44; verses 45-49 are placed in **Ezekiel 21**. 1-44 may be taken as a unit divided into two parts verses 1-33 describe the apostasies of the house of Judah and verses 35-44 speak of restoration.

'In the seventh year, in the fifth month on the tenth day, some of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and they sat down in front of me. Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Have you come to inquire of me? As surely as I live, I will

not let you inquire of me, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ ‘Will you judge them? Will you judge them, son of man? Then confront them with the detestable practices of their ancestors.’ Ezekiel 20:1-4

THE VISIT OF THE ELDERS

The year is now 590 B.C. and we are nearing the closing stages of this part of Israel’s history. Once again, the elders come to Ezekiel. Probably the same group who came in Ezekiel 8:1 and Ezekiel 14:1. From God’s comments to the prophet, it looks as if they are still in the same condition as they were back then.

‘And say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt. With uplifted hand I said to them, ‘I am the LORD your God.’ On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. And I said to them, ‘Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.’ ‘But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So, I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. But for the sake of my name, I brought them out of Egypt. I did it to keep my name from being profaned in the eyes of the nations among whom they lived and in whose sight, I had revealed myself to the Israelites. Therefore, I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws, by which the person who obeys them will live. Also, I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy. ‘Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws—by which the person who obeys them will live—and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So, I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the wilderness. But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. Also, with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land I had given them—a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands—because they rejected my laws and did not follow my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths. For their hearts were devoted to their idols. Yet I looked on them with pity and did not destroy them or put an end to them in the wilderness. I said to their children in the wilderness, ‘Do not follow the statutes of your parents or keep their laws or defile yourselves with their idols. I am the LORD your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’ ‘But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws, of which I said, ‘The person who obeys them will live by them,’’ and they desecrated my Sabbaths. So, I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. But I withheld my hand, and for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. Also, with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries, because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths, and their eyes lusted after their parents’ idols. So, I gave them other statutes that were not good and laws through which they could not live; I defiled them through their gifts—the sacrifice of every firstborn—that I might fill them with horror, so they would know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 20:5-26

FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

We are given a historical survey of the idolatry of the people of Israel. This time it is not figurative or done in an allegorical fashion; this is a fact. A survey of the historical material in Genesis to Deuteronomy will show up the constant desire to return to Egypt, rebel against God and practice idolatry.

As with the figurative picture in Ezekiel 16, we see how God gave her all she needed and was patient and merciful toward her. Ezekiel 20:6 / Ezekiel 20:11-12 / Ezekiel 20:15-17, etc. However, there were times when God allowed them to go the way they wanted. Ezekiel 20:25f.

‘Therefore, son of man, speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In this also your ancestors blasphemed me by being unfaithful to me: When I brought them into the land I had sworn to give them and they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices, made offerings that aroused my anger, presented their fragrant incense and poured out their drink offerings. Then I said to them: What is this high place you go to?’ (It is called Bamah to this day.) Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Will you defile yourselves the way your ancestors did and lust after their vile images? When you offer your gifts—the sacrifice of your children in the fire—you continue to defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. Am I to let you inquire of me, you Israelites? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will not let you inquire of me. ‘You say, “We want to be like the nations, like the peoples of the world, who serve wood and stone.’ But what you have in mind will never happen. As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will reign over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered—with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you. As I judged your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. ‘As for you, people of Israel, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols.’ Ezekiel 20:27-39

IN CANAAN

The idolatrous tendency continued in the land. Ezekiel 20:28 / Ezekiel 20:31, etc. Ezekiel and the people need to see that over and over again God has helped them, they have then rejected Him and gone and done their own thing.

There is a good example of Romans 1:26 ‘God gave them up’ in Ezekiel 20:39. Their continual following of idols causes God to just let them get on with it. If that is what they want to do, then OK. He will allow them their choice. But they must expect judgement because of their rebellion.

The judgement is pictured as God being a shepherd. Ezekiel 20:37. The shepherd would make the sheep pass under the rod that he might pick out his own. This is what God will do with them.

‘For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD, there in the land all the people of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices. I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will be proved holy through you in the sight of the nations. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your ancestors. There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. You will know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name’s sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, you people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 20:40-44

THE RESTORATION

Again, in the midst of the judgement, we have God’s promise for a remnant who would return to the land. And again, we see that it is God who supplies, allows and sustains that remnant.

When this happens, God will ‘manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations’. This will show all that God could have kept them there in the first place. Some might think the God of the Israelites was unable to keep them from the power of the Babylonians. Him bringing them back would prove He could have kept them there.

Please note that **Ezekiel 20:45** should be taken up to **Ezekiel 21:32**. Summary Jerusalem will be punished with a flaming sword. Babylon will be God’s executor of judgement. The priestly and kingly authority will be removed from Judah. Ammon will also be judged by God. Because of Israel’s rebellion, judgment has already come against the northern tribes, and God’s vengeance is poised against Judah.

Ezekiel now sees the sword of judgment coming, He turns his face Southward, and brings still other pronouncements against Judah’s sin. Perhaps the judgements keep coming because so few people have believed so far in his message.

As Ezekiel complains, they think he is simply bringing nice little parables, and interesting sermons, from which they derive some entertainment. Hence the picture of a sword, perhaps this will get their attention.

THE IMMINENCE OF JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION

The burning forest and the sword of the Lord. **Ezekiel 20:45-21:32**. The Burning Forest is a fire kindled by the Lord. **Ezekiel 20:45-49**. The sword of the Lord. **Ezekiel 21:1-32**. Its disastrous effects. **Ezekiel 21:1-7**. The sword sharpened for the slaying. **Ezekiel 21:8-17**.

The sword of the king of Babylon will smite Jerusalem, then smite the Ammonites also. **Ezekiel 21:18-23**. The prophecy will appear to Judeans as deceptive but will be verified. **Ezekiel 21:24-27**. The overthrow of the Ammonites. **Ezekiel 21:28-32**.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, set your face toward the south; preach against the south and prophesy against the forest of the southland. Say to the southern forest: ‘Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to set fire to you, and it will consume all your trees, both green and dry. The blazing flame will not be quenched, and every face from south to north will be scorched by it. Everyone will see that I the LORD have kindled it; it will not be quenched.’ Then I said, ‘Sovereign LORD, they are saying of me, ‘Isn’t he just telling parables?’ **Ezekiel 20:45-49**

THE PARABLE OF THE FIRE

Here the prophet is told to prophesy toward the south or the Negeb. The picture is of a great fire, and unquenchable fire spreading throughout all the south land. It originates with the Lord and it will consume the dry and the green tree. This is a hot fire.

Note verse 49, the people were making fun of Ezekiel just as they did to Jeremiah.

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

Please note that Ezekiel 20:45 should be taken up to Ezekiel 21:32.

SUMMARY

Jerusalem will be punished with a flaming sword. Babylon will be God's executor of judgement. The priestly and kingly authority will be removed from Judah. Ammon will also be judged by God. Because of Israel's rebellion, judgment has already come against the northern tribes, and God's vengeance is poised against Judah.

Ezekiel now sees the sword of judgment coming, He turns his face Southward, and brings still other pronouncements against Judah's sin. Perhaps the judgements keep coming because so few people have believed so far in his message.

As Ezekiel complains, they think he is simply bringing nice little parables, and interesting sermons, from which they derive some entertainment. Hence the picture of a sword, perhaps this will get their attention.

THE IMMINENCE OF JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

The burning forest and the sword of the Lord. Ezekiel 20:45-21:32.

The Burning Forest is a fire kindled by the Lord. Ezekiel 20:45-49.

The sword of the Lord. Ezekiel 21:1-32.

Its disastrous effects. Ezekiel 21:1-7.

The sword sharpened for the slaying. Ezekiel 21:8-17.

The sword of the king of Babylon will smite Jerusalem, then smite the Ammonites also. Ezekiel 21:18-23.

The prophecy will appear to Judeans as deceptive but will be verified. Ezekiel 21:24-27.

The overthrow of the Ammonites. Ezekiel 21:28-32.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuary. Prophecy against the land of Israel and say to her: 'This is what the LORD says: I am against you. I will draw my sword from its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked. Because I am going to cut off the righteous and the wicked, my sword will be unsheathed against everyone from south to north. Then all people will know that I the LORD have drawn my sword from its sheath; it will not return again.' 'Therefore groan, son of man! Groan before them with broken heart and bitter grief. And when they ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that is coming. Every heart will melt with fear and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every leg will be wet with urine.' It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD.' Ezekiel 21:1-7

THE PARABLE OF EZEKIEL 20:45-49 EXPLAINED

The prophet explains one figure with another. The figure changes to a sword, the Lord's sword. The land is now specified however, it is not the vague 'south', but Jerusalem and the land of Israel. So, the sword becomes a picture of the judgement that is coming throughout the whole land, from south to north. Everyone is going to suffer the consequences of this judgement; the sword is going to be busy.

'Once the sword of the Lord was drawn it would slay as indiscriminately as a forest fire destroys'. Ellison

The sword is drawn from its sheath, ready for action. We can see Ezekiel's reaction again to the news of judgement and destruction. Although instructed by the Lord to break down emotionally, it seems to me he wouldn't need much encouragement to cry over his people.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy and say, 'This is what the Lord says: 'A sword, a sword, sharpened and polished—sharpened for the slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! 'Shall we rejoice in the sceptre of my royal son? The sword despises every such stick. 'The sword is appointed to be polished, to be grasped with the hand; it is sharpened and polished, made ready for the hand of the slayer. Cry out and wail, son of man, for it is against my people; it is against all the princes of Israel. They are thrown to the sword along with my people. Therefore, beat your breast. 'Testing will surely come. And what if even the sceptre, which the sword despises, does not continue? declares the Sovereign LORD.' 'So then, son of man, prophesy and strike your hands together. Let the sword strike twice, even three times. It is a sword for slaughter—a sword for great slaughter, closing in on them from every side. So that hearts may melt with fear and the fallen be many, I have stationed the sword for slaughter at all their gates. Look! It is forged to strike like lightning, it is grasped for slaughter. Slash to the right, you sword, then to the left, wherever your blade is turned. I too will strike my hands together, and my wrath will subside. I the LORD have spoken.' Ezekiel 21:8-17

THE SWORD SHARPENED

Here is a yet clearer picture of the sword and what is going to happen. The sword is polished and sharpened. Several times in a testing situation, they are shown the sharpening and the polishing of the sword. It is sharpened for one reason, to slaughter better. It is polished to shine like lightning so that it might flash in battle and frighten the enemy.

What is all this saying?

The sword is not to be used as a rod of discipline. **Proverbs 13:24**, to spank them on the bottom. This is for judgement. They would not listen to another discipline, for they had ignored them in the past.

'Or do we make mirth?' This is no joke. This sword is out to kill. **Ezekiel 9:2**. This is no warning, no discipline, no testing. It is too late for that.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to take, both starting from the same country. Make a signpost where the road branches off to the city. Mark out one road for the sword to come against Rabbah of the Ammonites and another against Judah and fortified Jerusalem. For the king of Babylon will stop at the fork in the road, at the junction of the two roads, to seek an omen: He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, he will examine the liver. Into his right hand will come the lot for Jerusalem, where he is to set up battering rams, to give the command to slaughter, to sound the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to build a ramp and erect siege works. It will seem like a false omen to those who have sworn allegiance to him, but he will remind them of their guilt and take them captive. 'Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because you people have brought to mind your guilt by your open rebellion, revealing your sins in all that you do—because you have done this, you will be taken captive. Ezekiel 21:18-24

Once again, the prophet is active in visual aids. He procures a signpost and plants it at a road junction. On one part he writes Rabbah and on the other, he writes Jerusalem. Here is Nebuchadnezzar coming to deal with two rebellious states, Israel and Ammon. He is unsure of which one to hit first. So, he does the natural thing and consults the 'higher' powers.

Here we see three ways of divination:

1. Shaking arrows.
2. Consulting the teraphim.

3. Looking at the liver.

The arrow shaking would be similar to dice. Perhaps two with the names of the cities written on them, and if they landed a certain way then that place would be chosen. The teraphim would seem to be some kind of small images consulted in some way, maybe crystal-ball style. The liver looks involved the liver of a dead animal.

‘The interpretation of omens called for considerable skill on the part of the priests, resulting in the use of divinatory methods such as astrology and hepatoscopy (the examination of post-mortem livers) in an attempt to anticipate the trend of future events.’ R. K. Harrison. Old Testament times.

The undecided Babylonian thinks his superstitions have brought up Jerusalem, but Ezekiel knew different. Nebuchadnezzar is coming to Jerusalem by the will of Jehovah. The result of the divination is seen in Jerusalem in **Ezekiel 21:23**.

‘Them’, the people of Jerusalem, perhaps especially the false prophets. ‘It’, the result of the divination. The people think that the answer from the divination is a false one. They think that Babylon is now coming into their trap, for they have the Egyptians waiting. **Jeremiah 37:5 / Jeremiah 37:11**.

They have sworn victory for the people with the help of the Egyptians if the Babylonians come at all. **Jeremiah 37:3-11** shows us two things the people were saying at this time: Babylon will not come to Jerusalem. **Jeremiah 37:9**. If they do, they will fall into our trap. **Jeremiah 37:5**.

But the false prophecy and counsel were beginning to be shown up hence, uncovered transgressions and appearing sin. This is where the false divination is; the hand of Jehovah is with Nebuchadnezzar.

‘You profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.’ **Ezekiel 21:25-27**

This concerns the prince of Israel, Zedekiah. **Ezekiel 12:10**. His description as an unhallowed, wicked one is an apt one for this weak leader of Judah. His time of punishment is near in this judgement. The removal of the turban and the crown describes the coming upheaval in the priesthood and the royal family. They are going to be removed and not fully established together until the coming of an individual.

This seems clearly to be a reference to **Genesis 49:10** and therefore a Messianic prophecy. So, the kingly authority will be removed from Zedekiah and kept for the Messiah.

Note, **Psalms 89**. God made a covenant with David, that there would always be a Davidic ruler in Israel. The removal of Zedekiah seemed to break that covenant.

For 600 or so years there was no son of David ruling on the throne. This was a punishment on David’s family as had been the division of the kingdom. **1 Kings 11:9-13**.

The book of Daniel helped the Jews see that this was so and that God would rule through the heathen, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Then the kingdom would be given to a son of David again.

This was the kingdom restored to the Jews, the son of David in particular. **Daniel 2:36-45 / Micah 3:9-4:8 / Acts 1:6**. Jesus of Nazareth took that throne. **John 18:33-38 / Acts 17:7**.

‘And you, son of man, prophesy and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says about the Ammonites and their insults: ‘A sword, a sword, drawn for the slaughter, polished to consume and to flash like lightning! Despite false visions concerning you and lying divinations about you, it will be laid on the necks of the wicked who are to be slain, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax. ‘Let the sword return to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your ancestry, I will judge you. I will pour out my wrath on you and breathe out my fiery anger against you; I will deliver you into the hands of brutal men, men skilled in destruction.

You will be fuel for the fire, your blood will be shed in your land, you will be remembered no more; for I the LORD have spoken.' Ezekiel 21:28-32

THE JUDGEMENT ON AMMON

Just in case they thought they were getting away with it, God reminds them that the sword wielded by Babylon will come upon them too. In 581 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar came against Ammon. The sin of the ammonites is here intimated. The reproach that they put on the God of Israel when they triumphed in their afflictions was inhuman.

A conceit that they were a better people than Israel, being spared when they had been cut off, making them so haughty that they even tread on the necks of the Israelites that were slain.

The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatened. God resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself.

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

THE SINS OF JERUSALEM AND ISRAEL

Blood guiltiness of Jerusalem, and the burden of its sin. Ezekiel 22:1-16.

Principle accusation: bloodshed and idolatry. Ezekiel 22:1-5.

A multitude of sins were committed in Jerusalem. Ezekiel 22:6-12.

The Lord enrages; Judah to be scattered among the heathen. Ezekiel 22:13-16.

Refining of Israel in the furnace of besieged Jerusalem. Ezekiel 22:17-22.

The immediate cause of destruction: the corrupt state of all classes in the kingdom. Ezekiel 22:23-31.

SUMMARY

A catalogue of every type of sin in Jerusalem. Every type of person was involved in sin. They are condemned as dross to the fire. All are found guilty.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her detestable practices and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You city that brings on herself doom by shedding blood in her midst and defiles herself by making idols, you have become guilty because of the blood you have shed and have become defiled by the idols you have made. You have brought your days to a close, and the end of your years has come. Therefore, I will make you an object of scorn to the nations and a laughingstock to all the countries. Those who are near and those who are far away will mock you, you infamous city,

full of turmoil. 'See how each of the princes of Israel who are in you uses his power to shed blood. In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the foreigner and mistreated the fatherless and the widow. You have despised my holy things and desecrated my Sabbaths. In you are slanderers who are bent on shedding blood; in you are those who eat at the mountain shrines and commit lewd acts. In you are those who dishonour their father's bed; in you are those who violate women during their period, when they are ceremonially unclean. In you one man commits a detestable offense with his neighbour's wife, another shamefully defiles his daughter-in-law, and another violates his sister, his own father's daughter. In you are people who accept bribes to shed blood; you take interest and make a profit from the poor. You extort unjust gain from your neighbours. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign LORD. 'I will surely strike my hands together at the unjust gain you have made and at the blood you have shed in your midst. Will your courage endure, or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it. I will disperse you among the nations and scatter you through the countries; and I will put an end to your uncleanness. When you have been defiled in the eyes of the nations, you will know that I am the LORD.' Ezekiel 22:1-16

THE BLOODY CITY

An apt title for this section outlines the amount of bloodshed by the people of God in the city of God. Here is the absolute corruption in Jerusalem. The phrase, 'In you' is repeated 12 times throughout. The prophet is authorised to judge the Bloody city, city of blood, the cities crimes were bloody crimes, Ezekiel 7:23.

She makes idols against herself, her time of judgment has come. God has allowed them enough time that they have become a laughing stock. Children are set alight by father and mother. They enrich themselves by wronging the poor. A city known for its holiness is now polluted by lewdness. The real problem is You have forgotten your God, I will scatter them.

'Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, the people of Israel have become dross to me; all of them are the copper, tin, iron and lead left inside a furnace. They are but the dross of silver. Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into Jerusalem. As silver, copper, iron, lead and tin are gathered into a furnace to be melted with a fiery blast, so will I gather you in my anger and my wrath and put you inside the city and melt you. I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her. As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted inside her, and you will know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath on you.' Ezekiel 22:17-22

IN THE MELTING POT

The figure of a man using a furnace putting all these different metals in the pot. God is going to do this with them, creaming off the dross as He purifies His city. The wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described.

In David's and Solomon's time it had been a head of Gold, when kingdoms are divided they are arms of silver, and now that degeneration has taken place they are seen as the bases of metal. They need to be refined. They had fled for safety to Jerusalem now they will be destroyed.

'Again, the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, say to the land, 'You are a land that has not been cleansed or rained on in the day of wrath.' There is a conspiracy of her princes within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her. Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say,

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says’—when the LORD has not spoken. The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice. ‘I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land, so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. So, I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 22:23-31

THE EXTENT OF THE SIN

Four groups are isolated again probably to represent the sin of the whole people:

1. Priests.
2. Princes.
3. Prophets.
4. People.

A general idea is given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it and how much it needed these judgments to refine it, let the prophet tell her plainly. The prophets, who pretended to make known the mind of God, not only were they deceivers but devourers.

God is said to be unable to find one righteous man to prevent the judgement. This is not literal, for we know there were at least two, Jeremiah and Baruch, **Jeremiah 36:1ff**. God is saying there is not enough righteousness to prevent destruction. **Ezekiel 14:14**.

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

THE ALLEGORICAL PORTRAYAL OF THE HISTORY OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

The sisters Oholah and Oholibah, practised whoredom from the days of Egypt. **Ezekiel 23:1-4**.

Samaria’s whoredom and punishment. **Ezekiel 23:5-10**.

Whoredom of Judah. **Ezekiel 23:11-21**.

Punishment of the harlot Jerusalem. **Ezekiel 23:23-35**.

Additional summary of the sins and punishment of the two women. **Ezekiel 23:36-49**.

SUMMARY

Two ugly sisters, (harlots), Oholah and Oholibah. Samaria and Jerusalem shall be judged. If the picture of a sword fails to get their attention, the following allegory certainly ought to. In all of Scripture, there is probably no more graphic indictment.

Modern readers are almost offended by the candid exposure of two promiscuous sisters, representing Israel and Judah. You can get at least an idea of the degree to which God himself is offended by his people's unfaithfulness.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother. They became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled, and their virgin bosoms caressed. The older was named Oholah, and her sister was Oholibah. They were mine and gave birth to sons and daughters. Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.’ Ezekiel 23:1-4

Definition, Oholah, Samaria. Oholibah, Jerusalem. This comes from ‘Ohel’ which means a tent. There is a marriage relationship in view here and we must see the figurative and symbolic significance of the marriage rather than discussing how God could have two wives.

‘Oholah engaged in prostitution while she was still mine; and she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians—warriors clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, and mounted horsemen. She gave herself as a prostitute to all the elite of the Assyrians and defiled herself with all the idols of everyone she lusted after. She did not give up the prostitution she began in Egypt, when during her youth men slept with her, caressed her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her. ‘Therefore, I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, the Assyrians, for whom she lusted. They stripped her naked, took away her sons and daughters and killed her with the sword. She became a byword among women, and punishment was inflicted on her.’ Ezekiel 23:5-10

OHOLAH

Here is a picture of Israel, the northern kingdom forsaking her covenant with God and going after other men. Again, as in Ezekiel 16, their alliances with other nations are described in terms of adultery or rather harlotry. Hosea 8:9-10.

‘Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet in her lust and prostitution she was more depraved than her sister. She too lusted after the Assyrians—governors and commanders, warriors in full dress, mounted horsemen, all handsome young men. I saw that she too defiled herself; both of them went the same way. ‘But she carried her prostitution still further. She saw men portrayed on a wall, figures of Chaldeans portrayed in red, with belts around their waists and flowing turbans on their heads; all of them looked like Babylonian chariot officers, natives of Chaldea. As soon as she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. Then the Babylonians came to her, to the bed of love, and in their lust, they defiled her. After she had been defiled by them, she turned away from them in disgust. When she carried on her prostitution openly and exposed her naked body, I turned away from her in disgust, just as I had turned away from her sister. Yet she became more and more promiscuous as she recalled the days of her youth, when she was a prostitute in Egypt. There she lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses. So, you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when in Egypt your bosom was caressed, and your young breasts fondled.’ Ezekiel 23:11-21

OHOLIBAH

Here is the picture of Judah. She went one worse, not only going after the Assyrians but also the Chaldeans / Babylonians. This was despite what she saw happening to Samaria. We get a vivid picture of how God views covenant-breaking, 2 Kings 16:8 / Isaiah 7:7-9.

‘Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will stir up your lovers against you, those you turned away from in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side—the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, the men of Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, all of them governors and commanders, chariot officers and men of high rank, all mounted on horses. They will come against you with weapons, chariots and wagons and with a throng of people; they will take up positions against you on every side with large and small shields and with helmets. I will turn you over to them for punishment, and they will punish you according to their standards. I will direct my jealous anger against you, and they will deal with you in fury. They will cut off your noses and your ears, and those of you who are left will fall by the sword. They will take away your sons and daughters, and those of you who are left will be consumed by fire. They will also strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewellery. So, I will put a stop to the lewdness and prostitution you began in Egypt. You will not look on these things with longing or remember Egypt anymore. ‘For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to deliver you into the hands of those you hate, to those you turned away from in disgust. They will deal with you in hatred and take away everything you have worked for. They will leave you stark naked, and the shame of your prostitution will be exposed. Your lewdness and promiscuity have brought this on you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. You have gone the way of your sister; so, I will put her cup into your hand. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘You will drink your sister’s cup, a cup large and deep; it will bring scorn and derision, for it holds so much. You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, the cup of ruin and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria. You will drink it and drain it dry and chew on its pieces—and you will tear your breasts. I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. ‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Since you have forgotten me and turned your back on me, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and prostitution.’ Ezekiel 23:22-35

THE FATE OF OHOLIBAH

With three statements of ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says.’

In Ezekiel 23:22 / Ezekiel 23:28 and Ezekiel 23:32, God outlines the judgement of Judah because of her covenant breaking. The lovers whom she went after will turn on her. This is a favourite figure with God and Ezekiel on this occasion which we saw first in Ezekiel 16.

‘The LORD said to me: ‘Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then confront them with their detestable practices, for they have committed adultery and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols; they even sacrificed their children, whom they bore to me, as food for them. They have also done this to me: At that same time, they defiled my sanctuary and desecrated my Sabbaths. On the very day they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary and desecrated it. That is what they did in my house. ‘They even sent messengers for men who came from far away, and when they arrived you bathed yourself for them, applied eye makeup and put on your jewellery. You sat on an elegant couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed the incense and olive oil that belonged to me. ‘The noise of a carefree crowd was around her; drunkards were brought from the desert along with men from the rabble, and they put bracelets on the wrists of the woman and her sister and beautiful crowns on their heads. Then I said about the one worn out by adultery, ‘Now let them use her as a prostitute, for that is all she is.’ And they slept with her. As men sleep with a prostitute, so they slept with those lewd women, Oholah and Oholibah. But righteous judges will sentence them to the punishment of women who commit adultery and shed blood, because they are adulterous, and blood is on their hands. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Bring a mob against them and give them over to terror and plunder. The mob will stone them and cut them down with their swords; they will kill their sons and daughters and burn down their houses. ‘So, I will put an end to lewdness in the land, that all women may take warning and not imitate you. You will suffer the penalty for your lewdness and bear the consequences of your sins of idolatry. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 23:36-49

JUDGEMENT OF THE TWO SISTERS

Here the prophet simply repeats and enlarges on the judgements given in the previous sections. The aim is as always to show them that their Lord is THE GOD.

What more can be said?

God feels deeply the shame and is grace that his 'bride' has brought him. Her disrespect for His spiritual leadership, her chasing after marital satisfaction, and her many adulteries with lesser gods have left him no choice. Judah must be put away until she repents. The time has come and even now is.

SIEGE OF JERUSALEM. 590-589 B.C.

It is not known exactly when Zedekiah first gets the foolish idea to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, but it was probably around 590-589 B.C. When he does rebel, Nebuchadnezzar responds with his powerful Babylonian army and lays siege to the cities of Judah, including Jerusalem.

Have not all the prophets warned it would happen?

REBELLION AGAINST BABYLON

Jeremiah 52:3 / 2 Kings 24:20 / 2 Chronicles 36:13.

SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

Jeremiah 39:1, 588 B.C. Jeremiah 52:4 / 2 Kings 25:1.

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

SIEGE ANNOUNCED TO EZEKIEL (588 B.C.)

A most amazing thing happens on the very day of the siege, in the ninth year of king Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day. Some 300 to 700 miles away from Jerusalem, in the city of Tel. Abib, near the river Kebar in Babylonia.

The prophet Ezekiel is told about the siege, no messenger of Ezekiel's day can deliver news that quickly! None that is except God himself, and here is what Ezekiel is told.

PREDICTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM BOTH IN PARABLE AND BY SIGN

The allegorical portrayal of the siege and capture of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 24:1-14.

The date and occasion of the prophecy. Ezekiel 24:1-2.

Parable of the pot with the boiling pieces. Ezekiel 24:3-14.

The parable. Ezekiel 24:3-5.

The interpretation of the parable. Ezekiel 24:6-14.

Punishment of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 24:6-8.

Punishment of the city itself. Ezekiel 24:9-14.

The death of Ezekiel's wife is a symbol of despair caused by the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 24:15-27.

Sign of the silent sorrow concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 24:15-24.

The sequel of the destruction of Jerusalem to the prophet himself is no longer mute. Ezekiel 3:26-24:25-27.

SUMMARY

Imminent Judgement Two Signs. The rusty Pot. Death of Ezekiel's wife.

'In the ninth year, in the tenth month on the tenth day, the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, record this date, this very date because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.' Ezekiel 24:1-2

THE SIGN OF THE RUSTY POT

9th year, 10th month, 10th day, the date is 15th January 588 B.C. Ezekiel is to note this day down, in his book of written prophecy perhaps. This is the day that the siege of Jerusalem began. 2 Kings 25:1 / Jeremiah 39:1 / Jeremiah 52:4. He brings to the people two different signs regarding destruction.

'Tell this rebellious people a parable and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Put on the cooking pot; put it on and pour water into it. Put into it the pieces of meat, all the choice pieces—the leg and the shoulder. Fill it with the best of these bones; take the pick of the flock. Pile wood beneath it for the bones; bring it to a boil and cook the bones in it. 'For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Woe to the city of bloodshed, to the pot now encrusted, whose deposit will not go away! Take the meat out piece by piece in whatever order it comes. 'For the blood she shed is in her midst: She poured it on the bare rock; she did not pour it on the ground, where the dust would cover it. To stir up wrath and take revenge I put her blood on the bare rock, so that it would not be covered. 'Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Woe to the city of bloodshed! I, too, will pile the wood high. So, heap on the wood and kindle the fire. Cook the meat well, mixing in the spices; and let the bones be charred. Then set the empty pot on the coals till it becomes hot and its copper glows, so that its impurities may be melted, and its deposit burned away. It has frustrated all efforts; its heavy deposit has not been removed, not even by fire. 'Now your

impurity is lewdness. Because I tried to cleanse you but you would not be cleansed from your impurity, you will not be clean again until my wrath against you has subsided. 'I the LORD have spoken. The time has come for me to act. I will not hold back; I will not have pity, nor will I relent. You will be judged according to your conduct and your actions, declares the Sovereign LORD.' Ezekiel 24:3-14

THE PARABLE OF THE COOKING POT

This may be an event or simply an allegory related by the prophet. He boils water in a pot using wood and bones for heat. He boils up good meat. When it is ready he is told to take out pieces indiscriminately, without choice. These bones when picked clean are to be added to the fire.

The bones act like charcoal, keeping it red hot. Then he is to empty out the water and let the pot be heated until the rust is removed from the pot.

The pot, the destruction of Jerusalem.

Rusty pot? Lawlessness, immorality.

The bones and good meat, the leaders and people, thighs and shoulders.

Picked out without discrimination.

Bones to be burned, judgment is great and total. This is a description of the invasion of the city by the Babylonians and how they will act when they get in.

God wanted to cleanse his people, but they would not let him. We are shown once more that the only way God is able to get rid of the filth is through the fire. the cleansing will be total. 5 times God begins his intention.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears. Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover your moustache and beard or eat the customary food of mourners.' So, I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning, I did as I had been commanded.' Ezekiel 24:15-18

THE DEATH OF EZEKIEL'S WIFE

Following this word about the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, comes one of the most disturbing accounts in all recorded Scripture. It is nothing new for God to provide signs of his working. Ezekiel himself has enacted many of them in the presence of his people and provided his interpretation for their edification. And it is nothing new for God to require a great sacrifice on the part of his prophets.

But God now brings a sign which requires the ultimate sacrifice of Ezekiel. As a sign that there will be no mourning for the loss of life when the city of Jerusalem falls. God actually takes the life of Ezekiel's wife!

'Then the people asked me, 'Won't you tell us what these things have to do with us? Why are you acting like this?'

So, I said to them, 'The word of the LORD came to me: Say to the people of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword. And you will do as I have done. You will not cover your moustache and beard or eat the customary food of mourners. You will keep your

turbans on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep but will waste away because of your sins and groan among yourselves. Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.’ ‘And you, son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes, their heart’s desire, and their sons and daughters as well—on that day a fugitive will come to tell you the news. At that time your mouth will be opened; you will speak with him and will no longer be silent. So, you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 24:19-27

Probably the same day, the prophet’s wife is to be used as a sign. She will stand for the Temple, city, all that the people delighted in. His wife is described as the delight of his eyes, showing his great love for her, and she is to die and become a sign for the exiles.

Her death was sudden, it happened at a stroke. She was not ill and expected perhaps to die soon, it was sudden, unexpected death. He was told some things to do and others not to do upon her death, each of which showed that he had not to show outward signs of mourning for her. Do not sigh, a groaning, mourn, cover lips, eat the mourner’s bread. Do not put on a turban, and shoes. These were usually removed in distress. **Exodus 39:28 / Isaiah 61:3 / Isaiah 61:6 / 2 Samuel 15:30.**

Whether Ezekiel was allowed to mourn his wife’s death or not, and if not whether God was being very hard on him is debatable. It is possible he was being told that he could not show outward or ceremonious grief, although God did allow him to be human and mourn personally for her. Undoubtedly this sensitive man felt a lot losing someone who was the ‘delight of his eyes’.

The message for the exiles was clear. When they lost the delight of their eyes, temple, city, etc. they were to act as Ezekiel had acted. This was to show that they accepted this act as the will of God. **Jeremiah 7:4 / Ezekiel 33:24.**

When that happened Ezekiel was to receive a messenger telling him of what was happening.

Perhaps Ezekiel’s wife was dying in any event, and God simply used her death as a way of bringing an important message. But that would be highly coincidental and clearly contrary to Ezekiel’s account.

Certainly, it can be said that Ezekiel is being asked to give up more than what God himself will give up one day in order to bring a sign to all the world.

Perhaps that is the answer, as the creator of the universe God can and does act in ways that confound man. Death to God has a different significance than it does for man. But the immediate mystery is how Ezekiel can seemingly take his wife’s death in his stride and continue his ministry.

What a testimony to any man’s faith this would be.

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah’s prophecies during the siege are from Zedekiah’s inquires of his fate, **Jeremiah 21:1-2.**

A lasting Jerusalem, **Jeremiah 31:38-40.**

EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES DURING THE SIEGE

Predictions of judgment upon the foreign, heathen, nations. Ezekiel 25-32.

SUMMARY

God speaks against seven nations. We are given two major lessons:

‘If God will not tolerate ungodliness and insolence in his own people he will certainly not tolerate it in others.’

‘God is no local deity whose power is limited to the land of Palestine. He can reach out and judge nations wherever they live for he is Lord of all.’ McGuiggan.

These chapters are here primarily for Israel’s sake. Ezekiel 28:24-26. It is highly unlikely that the nations round about Judah ever heard Ezekiel make these statements and also unlikely that the prophet ever travelled to these places. The understanding of these prophecies is not essential to the scope of the book, so in this study, we will note the sin of each nation, its reason for punishment and a few important points only on the way through. The time for these prophecies against the nations that surrounded Israel came before the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem. All these nations were related in some way to Israel through Abraham.

Throughout their history, they seem to have manifested their envy that Israel was considered the chosen people of God, and not their forefathers from whom they originated. Because they possibly dealt in an envious manner toward their relative, Israel, they rejoiced when she was humbled through destruction and captivity.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites and prophesy against them. Say to them, ‘Hear the word of the Sovereign LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you said ‘Aha!’ over my sanctuary when it was desecrated and over the land of Israel when it was laid waste and over the people of Judah when they went into exile, therefore I am going to give you to the people of the East as a possession. They will set up their camps and pitch their tents among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk. I will turn Rabbah into a pasture for camels and Ammon into a resting place for sheep. Then you will know that I am the LORD. For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet, rejoicing with all the malice of your heart against the land of Israel, therefore I will stretch out my hand against you and give you as plunder to the nations. I will wipe you out from among the nations and exterminate you from the countries. I will destroy you, and you will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 25:1-7

AMMON. (588 B.C.)

Sin: They rejoiced over the desolation of Israel.

When Nebuchadnezzar finally brought an end to Judah through the destruction of Jerusalem, Ammon rejoiced. Ammon rejoiced when the temple was defiled and the land laid waste. She possibly saw Judah’s demise as revenge for what had formerly transpired when Israel conquered her many years before when they were entering the promised land. Judges 10:9-11:40.

When the northern kingdom of Israel fell in 722/721 B.C., the Ammonites reclaimed the territory that was formerly taken from them, Jeremiah 49:1. She then attacked the southern kingdom of Judah in 600 B.C. Because of her resentment and evil actions toward Judah, the judgment that would be brought on her would result in her termination

from history as a nation. The Ammonites would be assimilated into the world powers that would control the Near East, and thus go out of existence as a nation of people.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘Because Moab and Seir said, ‘Look, Judah has become like all the other nations,’ therefore I will expose the flank of Moab, beginning at its frontier towns—Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon and Kiriathaim—the glory of that land. I will give Moab along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, so that the Ammonites will not be remembered among the nations; and I will inflict punishment on Moab. Then they will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 25:8-11

MOAB

Sin: They ignored the family ties between the two nations. **Jeremiah 48 / Jeremiah 25:8.**

Israel was arrogant in the fact that she was the chosen of God. When she went into apostasy by adopting the idol gods of her neighbours, then her neighbours said that she was no different from them. When Jerusalem fell, and the temple was destroyed, the nations mocked Israel, reaffirming their claim that she too was only another nation of the world like them. Since Israel could no longer claim to have the special protection of her God, then she could no longer claim to be the special people of God.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘Because Edom took revenge on Judah and became very guilty by doing so, therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will stretch out my hand against Edom and kill both man and beast. I will lay it waste, and from Teman to Dedan they will fall by the sword. I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they will deal with Edom in accordance with my anger and my wrath; they will know my vengeance, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 25:12-14

EDOM

Sin: Revenge on their brother nation. **Obadiah 10ff.**

From the day that Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, the Edomites were antagonistic against Israel. These descendants of Esau seemed never to forgive Abraham for allowing their forefather to be cast out of his camp, **Genesis 35:22-36:43.**

Their hatred of Israel led them to work against God’s plan through Israel. Because of their work against the plan of God, they brought judgment on themselves, which judgment meant their extinction from history, **Ezekiel 35:1-36:15.** Their hatred went so far as to murder the Israelites who escaped from Jerusalem when it was under siege by the Babylonians.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘Because the Philistines acted in vengeance and took revenge with malice in their hearts, and with ancient hostility sought to destroy Judah, therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will wipe out the Kerethites and destroy those remaining along the coast. I will carry out great vengeance on them and punish them in my wrath. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I take vengeance on them.’ Ezekiel 25:15-17

PHILISTIA

Sin: Continual vengefulness.

From the time Joshua led the Israelites into the land of promise, the Philistines were the continual antagonist against Israel's possession of the land, **Judges 3:31 / Judges 14:1-16 / 1 Samuel 4:1-6 / 2 Chronicles 26:6-7**.

Because the Israelites had throughout their history defeated the Philistines on many occasions, they harboured an ongoing hatred of Israel. When Israel fell, they rejoiced over her demise. Because of their actions against Israel, God's prophets pronounced their certain demise and extinction from history, **Isaiah 14:29-32 / Jeremiah 25:20 / Amos 1:6-8**.

Kerethites was another name for the Philistines. This name was possibly given to the Philistines before the Israelites arrived in Palestine, for they had migrated from Crete, or Caphtor, **Deuteronomy 2:23 / Jeremiah 47:4 / Amos 9:7**.

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION

JUDGMENT AGAINST TYRE, MISTRESS OF THE SEA

Prediction of Tyre's doom, broken and destroyed. **Ezekiel 26:1-6**.

Nebuchadnezzar will bring about their destruction. **Ezekiel 26:7-14**.

The people will mourn their princes. **Ezekiel 26:15-18**.

Tyre will be totally destroyed. **Ezekiel 26:19-21**.

Sin: They sought to prosper from Judah's downfall. Pride.

'In the eleventh month of the twelfth year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, 'Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper,' therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations, and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD. For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you. He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons. His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the warhorses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through. The hooves of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground. They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more. I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.' **Ezekiel 26:1-14**

Tyre and Sidon were prominent gateway seaport cities. Palestine, and the nations immediately east of Palestine, were able to trade with the Mediterranean cities through the ports of these two cities. The Israelites evidently functioned as

‘customs control’ when nations such as Syria, Ammon and Moab to her north, and cities to the east and south, traded with the coastal cities of the Mediterranean Sea, **Ezekiel 27:5-25**. But when Judah fell, the traders had free access to these nations.

However, such was not to be for God wanted to destroy both Tyre and Sidon in order to desolate the land of Palestine and punish those neighbouring nations of Israel who sought her demise. Because of their strategic location and trade with many nations, the people followed after the pride of their King Ithobaal II, **Ezekiel 28:12**. They lifted themselves up, but they would be brought down.

According to Josephus, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years. Once he conquered the city, the port came under Babylonian control, but never functioned as it did prior to the Babylonian destruction.

Years later Alexander the Great also besieged the city. During the siege by the Greeks, a remnant of the people of Tyre fled from Alexander to a small island off the coast of the mainland city.

In order to completely devastate the city, however, the army of Alexander built a causeway with the remains of the coastland city by throwing stones into the sea. A causeway was thus made in order to access the small island. The city was never rebuilt in ancient times to the former glory that it enjoyed prior to its destruction by the Babylonians.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Tyre: Will not the coastlands tremble at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan and the slaughter takes place in you? Then all the princes of the coast will step down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and take off their embroidered garments. Clothed with terror, they will sit on the ground, trembling every moment, appalled at you. Then they will take up a lament concerning you and say to you: ‘How you are destroyed, city of renown, peopled by men of the sea! You were a power on the seas, you and your citizens; you put your terror on all who lived there. Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; the islands in the sea are terrified at your collapse.’ ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When I make you a desolate city, like cities no longer inhabited, and when I bring the ocean depths over you and its vast waters cover you, then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of long ago. I will make you dwell in the earth below, as in ancient ruins, with those who go down to the pit, and you will not return or take your place in the land of the living. I will bring you to a horrible end and you will be no more. You will be sought, but you will never again be found, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ **Ezekiel 26:15-21**

The kings of all the Mediterranean coastal nations would lament the fall of Tyre simply because they would lose a very strategic trade port to the Near East nations. They would be economically devastated by the demise of a great amount of trade.

Not only would the city fall, but the unrighteous would be brought down to the pit. What is symbolized in verse 20 is not a location of the dead, but a metaphorical understanding in reference to the beliefs of the people.

Shrines and temples were built on high places because of the peoples’ belief that God could be better accessed on hills and mountains.

The opposite to such locations would be the depths of the earth. This was the location, therefore, where it was believed that demons existed.

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

LAMENT FOR TYRE

Describes the beauty and wealth of Tyre. Ezekiel 27:1-9.

Tyre's army was made up of many nations. Ezekiel 27:10-11.

The splendour of Tyre's commerce. Ezekiel 27:12-25.

The time is coming when all who praised her will despise her. Ezekiel 27:26-36.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, take up a lament concerning Tyre. Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'You say, Tyre, 'I am perfect in beauty.' Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection. They made all your timbers of juniper from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; of cypress wood from the coasts of Cyprus they made your deck, adorned with ivory. Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail and served as your banner; your awnings were of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah. Men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your skilled men, Tyre, were aboard as your sailors. Veteran craftsmen of Byblos were on board as shipwrights to caulk your seams. All the ships of the sea and their sailors came alongside to trade for your wares. 'Men of Persia, Lydia and Put served as soldiers in your army. They hung their shields and helmets on your walls, bringing you splendour. Men of Arvad and Helek guarded your walls on every side; men of Gammad were in your towers. They hung their shields around your walls; they brought your beauty to perfection. 'Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise. 'Greece, Tubal and Meshek did business with you; they traded human beings and articles of bronze for your wares. 'Men of Beth Togarmah exchanged chariot horses, cavalry horses and mules for your merchandise. 'The men of Rhodes traded with you, and many coastlands were your customers; they paid you with ivory tusks and ebony. 'Aram did business with you because of your many products; they exchanged turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies for your merchandise. 'Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, olive oil and balm for your wares. 'Damascus did business with you because of your many products and great wealth of goods. They offered wine from Helbon, wool from Zahar and casks of wine from Izal in exchange for your wares: wrought iron, cassia and calamus. 'Dedan traded in saddle blankets with you. 'Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your customers; they did business with you in lambs, rams and goats. 'The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; for your merchandise they exchanged the finest of all kinds of spices and precious stones, and gold. 'Harran, Kanneh and Eden and merchants of Sheba, Ashur and Kilmad traded with you. In your marketplace they traded with you beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multi-coloured rugs with cords twisted and tightly knotted. 'The ships of Tarshish serve as carriers for your wares. You are filled with heavy cargo as you sail the sea. Your oarsmen take you out to the high seas. But the east wind will break you to pieces far out at sea. Your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, sailors and shipwrights, your merchants and all your soldiers, and everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck. The shore lands will quake when your sailors cry out. All who handle the oars will abandon their ships; the mariners and all the sailors will stand on the shore. They will raise their voice and cry bitterly over you; they will sprinkle dust on their heads and roll in ashes. They will shave their heads because of you and will put on sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and with bitter mourning. As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament concerning you: 'Who was ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea?' When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations; with your great wealth and your wares you enriched the kings of the earth. Now you are shattered by the sea in the depths of the waters; your wares and all your company have gone down with you. All who live in the coastlands are appalled at you; their kings shudder with horror and their faces are distorted with fear. The merchants among the nations scoff at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.' Ezekiel 27:1-36

Judgment upon Tyre was an indirect judgment upon all those nations who traded through her ports. Her trading partners extended even to the ports of Spain and all of northern Africa. The Near East trade that went through the port city of Tyre is often ignored when dealing with the judgment of God upon the nation of Israel.

When Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, God gave to the Israelites all the territory that extended into the land of the Hittites to the north, modern-day Turkey, to the border with Egypt to the south. He even gave them the territory to the east of the Jordan River when they defeated the Ammonites. The territory that He gave them was the heart of all the Near East trade.

If they would have remained faithful to Him, they would have developed into one of the most glorious empires of the world with the opportunity to influence the world for God. One wonders what the world would have been like today if they had remained faithful to God. They had the opportunity, but they foolishly turned their back on God.

The emphasis on the greatness of Tyre in this chapter manifests just a portion of the international trade and opportunity that Israel could have had if she would have conquered all the land that God gave her, and then remained faithful to Him. Just having this one city within her border would have given her the opportunity to preach the name of God throughout all nations of the world.

As Bible historians, therefore, we see in the words of this prophecy concerning the fall of Tyre the fall of a great opportunity for Israel that they could have had if they would have controlled their rebellious attitude and stiff-necked behaviour.

There is thus more to the words of this prophecy against Tyre than a condemnation of the city. We must not forget that the city and port could have belonged to the people of God, who in turn could have had a great impact on the world through their monotheistic beliefs.

CHAPTER 28

INTRODUCTION

JUDGMENT AGAINST TYRE'S KING

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.’ But you are a mere mortal and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god. Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you? By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries. By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud. ‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘Because you think you are wise, as wise as a god, I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations; they will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendour. They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die a violent death in the heart of the seas. Will you then say, ‘I am a god,’ in the presence of those who kill you? You will be but a mortal, not a god, in the hands of those who slay you. You will die the death of the uncircumcised at the hands of foreigners. I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 28:1-10

It was the pride of Tyre that brought about her ruin.

Note, [Ezekiel 28:1ff](#) is often used to refer to the past history of Satan. [Ezekiel 28:2](#) is used of Satan when he got above his station. [Ezekiel 28:8](#) records Satan’s fall from heaven. [Ezekiel 28:13](#) shows he was in Eden as recorded in [Genesis 2-3](#).

In answer to this, we quickly note the context of [Ezekiel 28](#) is clearly concerning, ‘the prince of Tyre’, [Ezekiel 28:1](#). In [Ezekiel 28:2](#) he is clearly shown to be a man, not a spirit being, who thought himself a god. [Acts 12:20-25](#). [Ezekiel 28:13](#) may be simply a reference that the Tyrians were prosperous because God had given them what they had; Eden is symbolic of that.

Any man on earth who would set himself up as one to be worshipped has declared his own doom, [Acts 14](#). Only God is to be worshipped, for it was He who created all things. The city of Tyre, therefore, was to pay the price for the arrogance of their king. We would assume, however, that they would not have been punished because of their innocence in this matter.

They evidently accepted him as a god, and thus gave him worship. Daniel was but a man, but wiser than the king of Tyre. This statement was a mockery of the king for his arrogant presumption that he would be as wise as God. If the king claimed to be a god, then he would have to be omniscient, and thus no secret could be hidden from him.

The king's self-deception was that his great acquisition of treasures led him to believe that he was as wise as Solomon. But he went one step further. He thought he was as wise as a god. His worldly wisdom to acquire riches was not a qualification for claiming to be a god. So, because he claimed to be God, God would send a ruthless army against him in order to bring him down. And once he was brought down, he was asked if he would still claim to be a god.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So, I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So, I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade, you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So, I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’ Ezekiel 28:11-19

KING'S SATAN LIKE RULE

More lamentations because of the destruction of their nation. God had set the king of Tyre in his position as the king, [Romans 13:1-4](#). But because of his sin, God would bring him down. He was a leader that God raised up in order to accomplish His purpose among His people. But when the sin of materialism took control of his life, he was taken out by God.

The people would actually learn a lesson from the fall of the king of Tyre. He exalted himself among the people as a god. However, he was brought down. Though they may not have recognised that it was God who brought him down, they certainly learned that one as the great king of Tyre could be no god, for he was brought down by another king who was more powerful than he.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, set your face against Sidon; prophesy against her and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘I am against you, Sidon, and among you I will display my glory. You will know that I am the LORD, when I inflict punishment on you and within you are proved to be holy. I will send a plague upon you and make blood flow in your streets. The slain will fall within you, with the sword against you on every side. Then you will know that I am the LORD. ‘No longer will the people of Israel have malicious neighbours who are painful briars and sharp thorns. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When I gather the people of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of the nations. Then they will live in their own land, which I gave to my servant Jacob. They will live there in safety and will build houses and plant vineyards; they will live in safety when I inflict

punishment on all their neighbours who maligned them. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God.' Ezekiel 28:20-26

JUDGMENT AGAINST SIDON

Sidon is also to Perish by pestilence and sword. Sixteen years from now, after Nebuchadnezzar has laid a 13-year siege against Tyre, Ezekiel will now record a footnote to his present prophecy. The fall of Sidon but to complete annihilation. In contrast, the Lord's people are to be healed.

Since Tyre and Sidon were sister cities, they were considered in prophecy together. What affected one, affected the other, [Isaiah 23:1-2](#) / [Mark 7:24-26](#) / [Acts 12:20](#). Ezekiel and the other prophets spoke against both Tyre and Sidon. They proclaimed that they would fall. Once they fell, God's prophets were proved to be sent from God who only can know the future.

The nations that surrounded Israel continually plagued them throughout their history. But this would come to an end, for these nations would be terminated by God. This was done when the Medo-Persian Empire assumed control of all the former possessions of the Assyrians and Babylonians.

When God brought His people back to the land of Palestine, the people who were already in the land, and the territory of all neighbouring nations, were under the authority of the Medo-Persian Empire.

They could not rise up against the returned remnant of Israel, lest they be seen as rising up against the Medo-Persian authority that was in control of all of Palestine and surrounding regions.

For this reason, the Jews dwelt safely in the land when they returned, for they were under the protection of the Medo-Persians, Ezra and Nehemiah. God would be set apart in their minds as the only true and living God.

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION

JUDGMENT AGAINST EGYPT. EZEKIEL 29:1-32:32. 587 B.C.

Sin: Pride.

Pharaoh's pride is the cause of its downfall. Ezekiel 29:1-5.

God's judgment of Egypt. Ezekiel 29:6-9.

Egypt will be destroyed but her restoration is foretold. Ezekiel 29:10-16.

Nebuchadnezzar will conquer and plunder Egypt. Ezekiel 29:17-21.

LAMENT FOR EGYPT

Day of judgment speedy and complete. Ezekiel 30:1-19.

The Lord will have vengeance on Egypt and her allies. Ezekiel 30:1-5.

Egypt's supporters will leave her. Ezekiel 30:6-9.

Nebuchadnezzar will be God's method of vengeance. Ezekiel 30:10-12.

God describes how his vengeance will be inflicted. Ezekiel 30:13-19

'In the tenth year, in the tenth month on the twelfth day, the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. Speak to him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster lying among your streams. You say, 'The Nile belongs to me; I made it for myself.' But I will put hooks in your jaws and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales. I will pull you out from among your streams, with all the fish sticking to your scales. I will leave you in the desert, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the open field and not be gathered or picked up. I will give you as food to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the sky. Then all who live in Egypt will know that I am the LORD. 'You have been a staff of reed for the people of Israel. When they grasped you with their hands, you splintered, and you tore open their shoulders; when they leaned on you, you broke, and their backs were wrenched.' Ezekiel 29:1-7

This message of Ezekiel was delivered during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. It is specifically directed toward the Pharaoh of Egypt. Because the Pharaohs of Egypt thought that they were the descendants of the gods, they were arrogant and pompous. The Nile River was the source of food for Egypt, and thus the foundation of their existence. The crops of Egypt were planted along the silted banks of the Nile, which made it possible for Egypt to have food even in the worst of famines.

Pharaoh wallowed in the wealth of the Nile. But God would bring him up from the Nile as a fish caught on a hook. As scales are attached to the fish, the people would cling to the big fish Pharaoh, which would result in all of them being cast into the wilderness.

It was abhorrent to the Egyptians not to be buried, especially for the Pharaoh who would enjoy a great entombment at the time of his burial. Because they would not be buried, animals and birds would eat their discarded bodies. Israel had leaned on Egypt in the past for help, but Egypt crumbled as a staff that was made of flimsy reeds.

'Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will bring a sword against you and kill both man and beast. Egypt will become a desolate wasteland. Then they will know that I am the LORD. 'Because you said, 'The Nile is mine; I made it,' therefore I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of Cush. The foot of neither man nor beast will pass through it; no one will live there for forty years. I will make the land of Egypt desolate among devastated lands, and her cities will lie desolate forty years among ruined cities. And I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries.' Ezekiel 29:8-12

Egypt would be laid waste by the Babylonians from the small town of Migdol in the north, Exodus 14:2 / Numbers 33:7, to Syene, modern-day Aswan, in the south. This was the totality of the heart of Egypt.

This time of 40 years may be symbolic, taken from Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Numbers 14:33 / Psalm 95:10. It would refer to the time when the Medo-Persian Empire extended into Egypt from 525 to 487 B.C. As Israel was scattered among the nations, so would the Egyptians be scattered during their period in the wilderness.

'Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations where they were scattered. I will bring them back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt, the land of their ancestry. There they will be a lowly kingdom. It will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the other nations. I will make it so weak that it will never again rule over the nations. Egypt will no longer be a

source of confidence for the people of Israel but will be a reminder of their sin in turning to her for help. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 29:13-16

Only the Egyptians were promised to be restored to their land. All the other nations against whom prophecies were made, were destined to termination. God seems to make this promise to the Egyptians because they were the nation that housed His people during their years of development as a nation.

Though the Egyptians would emerge as a nation, they would not be the dominant and glorious nation that they were in their former years. In her apostasy, Israel turned to Egypt for help. But Egypt would never again be a strong nation to which Israel would be tempted to again turn for help.

‘In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month on the first day, the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon drove his army in a hard campaign against Tyre; every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder made raw. Yet he and his army got no reward from the campaign he led against Tyre. Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will carry off its wealth. He will loot and plunder the land as pay for his army. I have given him Egypt as a reward for his efforts because he and his army did it for me, declares the Sovereign LORD. ‘On that day I will make a horn grow for the Israelites, and I will open your mouth among them. Then they will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 29:19-21

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against Tyre for thirteen years. However, he took little spoil from the city. It was at this time in history that God was using the Babylonian Empire to bring judgment on Assyria for arrogantly striking against the people of God in the northern kingdom, and then against Judah.

In order that the Babylonian army to continue to be God’s proxy judgment against the apostate people of God, they needed to survive. For this reason, therefore, God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Egypt.

The reference to the horn of the house of Israel here could be to the time when God would open Ezekiel’s mouth once again to speak concerning Israel and her future.

At this time his mouth was closed, for he could speak only concerning the destiny of the nations around Israel. But when God once again allowed him to speak, he would speak of the restoration of Israel, as well as the coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

JUDGMENT AGAINST PHARAOH. (586 B.C.) THE ARMIES OF EGYPT WILL BE DESTROYED.

LAMENT FOR EGYPT

Day of judgment speedy and complete. Ezekiel 30:1-19.

The Lord will have vengeance on Egypt and her allies. Ezekiel 30:1-5.

Egypt's supporters will leave her. Ezekiel 30:6-9.

Nebuchadnezzar will be God's method of vengeance. Ezekiel 30:10-12.

God describes how his vengeance will be inflicted. Ezekiel 30:13-19.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Wail and say, "Alas for that day!" For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near—a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. A sword will come against Egypt, and anguish will come upon Cush. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down. Cush and Libya, Lydia and all Arabia, Kub and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt. 'This is what the LORD says: 'The allies of Egypt will fall, and her proud strength will fail. From Migdol to Aswan they will fall by the sword within her, declares the Sovereign LORD. 'They will be desolate among desolate lands, and their cities will lie among ruined cities. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers are crushed. 'On that day messengers will go out from me in ships to frighten Cush out of her complacency. Anguish will take hold of them on the day of Egypt's doom, for it is sure to come.' Ezekiel 30:1-9

In prophecy, this phrase meant that judgment and destruction were coming. The day of the Lord meant deliverance of the righteous by the destruction of the wicked, **2 Peter 3**.

In this historical context, Egypt and all nations who were in alliance with her were to suffer the destruction that would be coming from the Babylonian Empire. When Egypt and its alliance countries fell to the Babylonians, the neighbouring Ethiopians to the south of Egypt would also suffer.

'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He and his army—the most ruthless of nations—will be brought in to destroy the land. They will draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain. I will dry up the waters of the Nile and sell the land to an evil nation; by the hand of foreigners I will lay waste the land and everything in it. I the LORD have spoken.
Ezekiel 30:10-12

The Nile River would not completely dry up, but it would be so low that the irrigation canals would not feed through to the crops. However, most of the small rivers that dispersed from the mouth of the Nile in the land of Goshen would dry up.

'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images in Memphis. No longer will there be a prince in Egypt, and I will spread fear throughout the land. I will lay waste Upper Egypt, set fire to Zoan and inflict punishment on Thebes. I will pour out my wrath on Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt, and wipe out the hordes of Thebes. I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium will writhe in agony. Thebes will be taken by storm; Memphis will be in constant distress. The young men of Heliopolis and Bubastis will fall by the sword, and the cities themselves will go into captivity. Dark will be the day at Tahpanhes when I break the yoke of Egypt; there her proud strength will come to an end. She will be covered with clouds, and her villages will go into captivity. So, I will inflict punishment on Egypt, and they will know that I am the LORD.' Ezekiel 30:13-19

The cities mentioned are the principal cities throughout Egypt. Memphis was the capital of Lower Egypt, the northern region, and Pathros was the capital of Upper Egypt, the southern region.

'In the eleventh year, in the first month on the seventh day, the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. It has not been bound up to be healed or put in a splint so that it may become strong enough to hold a sword. Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt. I will break both his arms, the good arm as well as the broken one, and make the sword fall from his hand. I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries. I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him like a mortally wounded man. I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall limp. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he brandishes it against Egypt. I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries. Then they will know that I am the LORD.' Ezekiel 30:20-26

The date of this message against Pharaoh was 586 B.C., the year that Jerusalem fell. While Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem, the Egyptians came up to help Judah.

But Nebuchadnezzar temporarily left his siege of Jerusalem and engaged the Egyptians, whom he defeated and sent back to Egypt. Then again in 582/581 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar took his army into Egypt and ravaged the land.

The prophecy here made by Ezekiel possibly refers to the 582/581 attack of Nebuchadnezzar against Egypt.

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION

EGYPT COMPARED TO THE GLORY AND FALL OF ASSYRIA

The allegory of the great cedar Egypt is compared to Assyria a towering and mighty cedar. *Ezekiel 31:1-9*.

How that great cedar fell from power because of pride. *Ezekiel 31:10-18*.

‘In the eleventh year, in the third month on the first day, the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes: ‘Who can be compared with you in majesty? Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage. The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field. So, it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters. All the birds of the sky nested in its boughs, all the animals of the wild gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade. It was majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs, for its roots went down to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor could the junipers equal its boughs, nor could the plane trees compare with its branches—no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty. I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God.’

Ezekiel 31:1-9

This message is dated about two months after the previous message, *Ezekiel 30:20*. The prophecy here was directed to Pharaoh. However, Assyria is used to illustrate that no matter how great a kingdom might be, it can be brought down by God.

In order to exemplify the greatness of the Assyrian Empire, it was compared to a great cedar of Lebanon. The Assyrian Empire became extensive throughout the Near East. Other nations founded their security on its existence, trusting that it would never fall. Through its far-reaching governance of the Near East, nations could trade in peace.

The kings of the Empire were arrogant because of the greatness of the kingdom. God had raised up this empire for the purpose of using it to discipline His people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because the great cedar towered over the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height, I gave it into the hands of the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside, and the most ruthless of foreign nations cut it down and left it. Its boughs fell on the mountains and in all the valleys; its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the land. All the nations of the earth came out from under its shade and left it. All the birds settled on the fallen tree, and all the wild animals lived among

its branches. Therefore, no other trees by the waters are ever to tower proudly on high, lifting their tops above the thick foliage. No other trees so well-watered are ever to reach such a height; they are all destined for death, for the earth below, among mortals who go down to the realm of the dead.' Ezekiel 31:10-14

Though the Assyrian Empire was so great, the Babylonian Empire overcame it. Assyria was brought down. And when it was brought down, all those who depended on her existence came down with her.

The Babylonian army was composed of a coalition of forces that were of a warrior culture. They existed off the plunder of other nations. Their survival, therefore, depended on their plunder of those cities they conquered. The Assyrians could not stand against such an army. They were thus brought down to the pit of death.

'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day it was brought down to the realm of the dead I covered the deep springs with mourning for it; I held back its streams, and its abundant waters were restrained. Because of it I clothed Lebanon with gloom, and all the trees of the field withered away. I made the nations tremble at the sound of its fall when I brought it down to the realm of the dead to be with those who go down to the pit. Then all the trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, the well-watered trees, were consoled in the earth below. They too, like the great cedar, had gone down to the realm of the dead, to those killed by the sword, along with the armed men who lived in its shade among the nations. 'Which of the trees of Eden can be compared with you in splendour and majesty? Yet you, too, will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth below; you will lie among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword. 'This is Pharaoh and all his hordes, declares the Sovereign LORD.' Ezekiel 31:15-18

Assyria was brought down. And when it fell, it fell as a great tree to the ground, causing a tremor throughout the nations that depended on her existence. Such would be the fate of Egypt. Egypt was never the extensive empire that Assyria was.

And since Assyria was brought down by the Babylonians, Ezekiel wanted the Egyptians to know that they did not have a chance. They too would come crumbling down in order to find their place among the uncircumcised.

CHAPTER 32

INTRODUCTION

LAMENT FOR EGYPT

The evil, that will come upon the Pharaoh as a sea monster. Ezekiel 32:1-9.
The people will be scattered, the Babylonian king laments. Ezekiel 32:10-16.

THE GRAVES OF EVIL

The tumult of Egypt down to the pit. Ezekiel 32:17-21.

A series of heathen nations like Egypt who fell drew the wrath of God and Egypt meets in the pit. Ezekiel 32:22-30.

Ashur. Ezekiel 32:22-23.

Elam. Ezekiel 32:24-25.

Meshech-Tubal. Ezekiel 32:26-28.

Edom, the princes in the North, and Sidon. Ezekiel 32:29-30.

Egypt will there in the pit, see all these. Ezekiel 32:31-32.

‘In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month on the first day, the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, take up a lament concerning Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him: ‘You are like a lion among the nations; you are like a monster in the seas thrashing about in your streams, churning the water with your feet and muddying the streams. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘With a great throng of people I will cast my net over you, and they will haul you up in my net. I will throw you on the land and hurl you on the open field. I will let all the birds of the sky settle on you and all the animals of the wild gorge themselves on you. I will spread your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your remains. I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with your flesh. When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring about your destruction among the nations, among lands you have not known. I will cause many peoples to be appalled at you, and their kings will shudder with horror because of you when I brandish my sword before them. On the day of your downfall each of them will tremble every moment for his life.’ Ezekiel 32:1-10

This message against Pharaoh was delivered in March 585 B.C. It was delivered a year and nine months after the message of **Ezekiel 31:1**. This prophecy is specifically against Pharaoh. He made himself fierce like a lion, and like a great monster—possibly a reference to a whale—among the nations.

No matter how fierce and large Pharaoh presumed himself to be, he would be caught and entangled in the net of God, **Ezekiel 29:3-5**. Pharaoh would be brought out of his protective waters and laid out on the ground.

The wild birds and beasts would then come and devour him. He would not be allowed the honourable burial that was traditionally given to Pharaohs.

When Pharaoh fell, all his governors, princes and leaders of the land fell with him. Their influence was darkened. They were like stars and the moon that no longer gave their light. When Pharaoh, the sun, was covered, the Egyptian leaders, the moon, could no longer reflect the influence of the Pharaoh throughout the land.

When Pharaoh was brought down, all those nations that depended on Egypt were troubled. They would see that if Egypt could not stand against the invasion of the Babylonians, then surely, they could not stand.

‘For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘The sword of the king of Babylon will come against you. I will cause your hordes to fall by the swords of mighty men—the most ruthless of all nations. They will shatter the pride of Egypt, and all her hordes will be overthrown. I will destroy all her cattle from beside abundant waters no longer to be stirred by the foot of man or muddied by the hooves of cattle. Then I will let her waters settle and make her streams flow like oil, declares the Sovereign LORD. When I make Egypt desolate and strip the land of everything in it, when I strike down all who live there, then they will know that I am the LORD.’ ‘This is the lament they will chant for her. The daughters of the nations will chant it; for Egypt and all her hordes they will chant it, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 32:11-16

Death and destruction would not stop with Pharaoh. The Babylonians would strike the population of Egypt. Since God meant for the Babylonian army to be replenished with the spoil they would take from Egypt, the treasures of the country would be taken. The animals and crops would be taken for food.

The country would be plundered of its goods, and thus the people would be left with nothing to eat. Those who fled into the desert would starve.

‘In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and consign to the earth below both her and the daughters of mighty nations, along with those who go down to the pit. Say to them, ‘Are you more favoured than others? Go down and be laid among the uncircumcised.’ They will fall among those killed by the sword. The sword is drawn; let her be dragged off with all her hordes. From within the realm of the dead the mighty leaders will say of Egypt and her allies, ‘They have come

down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword.’ ‘Assyria is there with her whole army; she is surrounded by the graves of all her slain, all who have fallen by the sword. Their graves are in the depths of the pit and her army lies around her grave. All who had spread terror in the land of the living are slain, fallen by the sword. ‘Elam is there, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword. All who had spread terror in the land of the living went down uncircumcised to the earth below. They bear their shame with those who go down to the pit. A bed is made for her among the slain, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword. Because their terror had spread in the land of the living, they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are laid among the slain. ‘Meshek and Tubal are there, with all their hordes around their graves. All of them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword because they spread their terror in the land of the living. But they do not lie with the fallen warriors of old, who went down to the realm of the dead with their weapons of war—their swords placed under their heads and their shields resting on their bones—though these warriors also had terrorized the land of the living. ‘You too, Pharaoh, will be broken and will lie among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword. ‘Edom is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with those killed by the sword. They lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the pit. ‘All the princes of the north and all the Sidonians are there; they went down with the slain in disgrace despite the terror caused by their power. They lie uncircumcised with those killed by the sword and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit. ‘Pharaoh—he and all his army—will see them and he will be consoled for all his hordes that were killed by the sword, declares the Sovereign LORD. Although I had him spread terror in the land of the living, Pharaoh and all his hordes will be laid among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 32:17-21

Though the Egyptians considered themselves a distinct people from the rest of the Gentile nations, they would go down to death and join all the uncircumcised in Sheol. Pharaoh, and all his people, would be laid in the grave among all the other Gentiles.

All the spirits of the dead would go to the realm of departed spirits, the pit. This is not the eternal punishment, but the abode of the dead. Ashur or, Assyria, all the nations that were mentioned in this context were formidable military states. They all fell to succeeding nations, and thus Egypt would be no different. Meshech and Tubal were remnants of the Hittites who dwelt north of Palestine.

Though all these nations were a terror to the populations of the Near East, they were all gone, buried with their populations. The grave silenced their terror, and the world continued on to a better place without them. Pharaoh would suffer the same disgrace and the world would carry on.

CHAPTER 33

INTRODUCTION

The announcement of restoration and salvation. Ezekiel 33-48.
The calling of the prophet and his future attitude towards the people.

SUMMARY

We return to the watchman theme. Ezekiel 33:1-9.
The watchman’s message is individual responsibility. Ezekiel 33:10-20.
Ezekiel receives news that the city has fallen. Ezekiel 33:21-22.

Preaching repentance after the fall of Jerusalem, the consequences with regard to the prophet. Ezekiel 33:23-33.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not heed the warning and the sword comes and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head. Since they heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, their blood will be on their own head. If they had heeded the warning, they would have saved themselves. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone’s life, that person’s life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.’ ‘Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so, hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, ‘You wicked person, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved.’ Ezekiel 33:1-9

THE WATCHMAN

This is the link chapter between the two messages of the prophet. This section repeats Ezekiel 3:16-21. The only difference being one of direction. The people are being told that they had been given a watchman, Ezekiel. God defends the prophet before the people.

The prophets of the Old Testament were the watchmen of God, Ezekiel 3:16-21 / Isaiah 21:6 / Jeremiah 6:17 / Habakkuk 2:1. They were called in order to call Israel back to God. Their work was to warn the wicked, that they turn from their wicked ways. The Major and Minor Prophets existed for the purpose of warning God’s people during the era of apostasy that they should repent and return to God.

In this context, Ezekiel turned from the sins of the nation to the sins of the individual. Though the nation had to suffer the calamity of destruction and captivity, the individual would be saved through individual repentance and obedience to God’s law.

‘Son of man, say to the Israelites, ‘This is what you are saying: ‘Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?’ Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’ ‘Therefore, son of man, say to your people, ‘If someone who is righteous disobeys, that person’s former righteousness will count for nothing. And if someone who is wicked repents, that person’s former wickedness will not bring condemnation. The righteous person who sins will not be allowed to live even though they were formerly righteous.’ If I tell a righteous person that they will surely live, but then they trust in their righteousness and do evil, none of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered; they will die for the evil they have done. And if I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ but they then turn away from their sin and do what is just and right—if they give back what they took in pledge for a loan, return what they have stolen, follow the decrees that give life, and do no evil—that person will surely live; they will not die. None of the sins that person has committed will be remembered against them. They have done what is just and right; they will surely live. ‘Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ But it is their way that is not just. If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, they will die for it. And if a wicked person turns away from their wickedness and does what is just and right, they will live by doing so. Yet you Israelites say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ But I will judge each of you according to your own ways. Ezekiel 33:10-20

REVIEW OF THE MESSAGE

A glance back to Ezekiel 18 will give us the gist of this section. This repeats what that had to say about the prophet's message.

THE EXILED NATION. 585 – 535 B.C. EZEKIEL'S RESTORATION PROPHECIES

Twenty years have passed since the first captives were deported from Judah and the exile had begun. Now the city of Jerusalem had fallen, and the exile of the nation continued with greater magnitude. It will be another 50 years before the exile will end.

It is evidently some six months before one of the survivors of the Jerusalem slaughter finally makes his way to the prophet Ezekiel in Babylonia. Ezekiel gets a few hours advance warning of Jerusalem's fall when on the evening before the messenger arrives. Ezekiel is suddenly unable to speak.

Undoubtedly, he recalls the day the siege began, the day of his wife's death, When God told him his mouth would be opened when God told him that his mouth would be opened on the day when a messenger appears with news of the fall.

Just as promised Ezekiel's muteness disappears the following morning before the messenger arrives. With this dramatic confirmation of his earlier predictions concerning Jerusalem, Ezekiel once more sets out to proclaim the word of the Lord to the people.

He reminds them that the desolation has not yet ended, but assures them that it will end soon and that the promised restoration will begin. The time for healing will come quickly, so Ezekiel changes his focus to begin to comfort a scattered people.

'In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month on the fifth day, a man who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, 'The city has fallen!' Now the evening before the man arrived, the hand of the LORD was on me, and he opened my mouth before the man came to me in the morning. So, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer silent.'

Ezekiel 33:21-22

JERUSALEM FALL ANNOUNCED. 586 B.C.

Here is the news of the city's fall. A fugitive comes and brings him the news, just as God had told him. Two things are now evident:

1. The prophet will now have a new message.
2. The prophet is vindicated before the people. **Deuteronomy 18:22.**

'Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, the people living in those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was only one man, yet he possessed the land. But we are many; surely the land has been given to us as our possession.' Therefore, say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Since you eat meat with the blood still in it and look to your idols and shed blood, should you then possess the land? You rely on your sword, you do detestable things, and each of you defiles his neighbour's wife. Should you then possess the land?' Ezekiel 33:23-

THE RESIDUE IN JUDEA

This concerns Ishmael and some who tried to take the land that was left. When Nebuzaradan took Zedekiah away in 586 B.C. he left Gedaliah as governor. Ishmael and a small guerrilla group killed Gedaliah and sought to re-establish themselves as an independent nation again. **Jeremiah 40:41 / 2 Kings 25:25ff.** They thought they still deserved the land, they thought they were righteous and as Abraham was only one and they were many then of course it was theirs.

‘Say this to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: As surely as I live, those who are left in the ruins will fall by the sword, those out in the country I will give to the wild animals to be devoured, and those in strongholds and caves will die of a plague. I will make the land a desolate waste, and her proud strength will come to an end, and the mountains of Israel will become desolate so that no one will cross them. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolate waste because of all the detestable things they have done.’ Ezekiel 33:27-29

DESOLATION NOT ENDED

However, they did not inherit it. They went to Egypt and the land was left desolate. **Jeremiah 40-41 / 2 Kings 25:22f.**

‘As for you, son of man, your people are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, ‘Come and hear the message that has come from the LORD.’ My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice. ‘When all this comes true—and it surely will—then they will know that a prophet has been among them’. Ezekiel 33:30-33

THE POPULAR PROPHET

Now the people are forced by events to admit that the prophet was right. They make him popular, but they only hear what he has to say, they will not do it. They enjoy a good sermon, they dissect it technically, ‘but they will not do it.’

Those days haven’t disappeared yet.

CHAPTER 34

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS TO EZEKIEL 34-48

There are three main views of the meaning of this part of Ezekiel, three different ways of interpreting these chapters.

1. They speak of the millennium. **Revelation 20:4-6.**
2. They speak of the Messianic age, (church age).
3. They speak of the restoration of the remnant of Israel after the Babylonian captivity. (From 539 B.C. onward.)

These different interpretations, and any other understanding of these chapters of Ezekiel, differ because of the way they are approached, the main two approaches being to accept these chapters as either literal or figurative.

Let us look briefly at each of these and consider the pros and cons for each.

1. The Millennium.

Premillennialists almost all agree that scripture should be interpreted literally at almost any cost. There may be some exceptions to this, but the hard-line Premillennialists must go for literal interpretation. Hence on approaching **Ezekiel 34-38** there is the immediate problem of knowing that what is there recorded has not happened literally until now, therefore it must be yet future, in the 1,000-year reign period spoken of in **Revelation 20:4ff.**

Therefore, a totally literal understanding of these chapters puts it all at least 2,569 years (from 1983) from the time Ezekiel wrote it. Some necessary conclusions of this interpretation:

DAVID MUST BE RESURRECTED

Ezekiel 34:23 tells us that there will be one king at this time, David. That taken literally must mean that David is brought back from the dead. Unless of course, this is another David. **Acts 2:29.**

CIRCUMCISION WILL BE REINTRODUCED. EZEKIEL 44:9

This demands that circumcision will be essential to communion with God. The New Testament clearly says that to do that means to bring in the whole law. **Galatians 5:1-4.** It also clearly says that two laws cannot coexist, **Romans 7:1ff.** So, if we go this way we have the inferior, law of Moses, reintroduced at the expenses of the superior, law of Christ, when the 1,000 years begins. That throws the whole of the Gospel 'literally' out the window. **Hebrews 8:6-7.**

Sacrifices for sin will be introduced. **Ezekiel 43:19 / Ezekiel 43:22 / Ezekiel 43:25 / Ezekiel 44:27 / Ezekiel 44:29.**

These passages clearly say, 'for sin' and 'to make atonement.' There can be no misunderstanding of what that means. The same applies here as did the circumcision. The New Testament seems to contradict the need for a reintroduction of sacrifice for sin. **Hebrews 10:11-18.** **Hebrews 10:14** is quite specific that it is for all time. What is? Jesus sacrifice for sin was sufficient for all time. Even if there will be a 1000-year reign on earth by Christ, there will never be the need for any more sacrifice for sin.

LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD WAS BROUGHT BACK. EZEKIEL 44:15

Once again we are faced with the same difficulties. If we bring back the Levitical priesthood, again we must bring back the law of Moses. **Hebrews 7:11ff.**

So, to understand this literally as referring to a yet future millennial reign of Christ is to go against the teaching of the New Testament concerning the law.

2. The Messianic Age.

This view simply stated, applies these chapters to the blessings given to God's people during the time after Pentecost. To do this demands that we understand the whole passage figuratively. These chapters have to be symbolic in nature throughout for them to apply to this time.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

We can see from Scripture that God can and does use more than literal speech to mankind. Why he would do that may not be easy for us always to understand, but that he does it is nevertheless a fact. Old Testament prophecy must be interpreted other than literally when the occasion demands. The Bible clearly tells us that there were different ways of prophetic utterance. **Hebrews 1:1.**

Below are three examples of the different possibilities in prophetic interpretation as shown by the Bible itself.

1. Literal Language.

Micah 5:2 with **Matthew 2:1-8.** The prophet said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Matthew says it is literal fulfilled.

Isaiah 7:14 with **Matthew 1:18-23.** The prophet said the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Matthew says it is literally fulfilled.

2. Poetic Language.

Habakkuk 3:1ff. The opening and closing verses of this chapter clearly show that this is a poem or song. So here a prophet spoke in poetic language.

3. Figurative Language.

Compare **Haggai 2:6ff** with **Hebrews 12:18ff.** The prophet said that there would be a shaking of the heavens and earth and of all nations. The Hebrew writer tells us that this shaking took place at the establishment of an unshakeable kingdom which is the kingdom of Christ. **Hebrews 12:22-24.** So, this is a figurative shaking.

Isaiah 40:3ff with **Mark 1:1-4 / Luke 3:3-7 / Matthew 3:3-14.** The prophet said there would be some building roads in the wilderness for God. The three New Testament writers tell us that this was fulfilled in the preaching of John the Baptist. John was not a road builder, this too is figurative.

Malachi 4:5 with **Matthew 17:9-13 / Matthew 11:7-14.** The prophet says that Elijah will come back before the Messiah comes. On two occasions, Matthew records Jesus as saying this was fulfilled in John the Baptist. **Isaiah 28:16 / Psalm 118:22** with **Matthew 21:42-45 / Acts 4:10-12.**

The Old Testament writers speak of a stone which would be the foundation of Zion. Jesus and Peter say that Jesus, a man, was that foundation, fulfilling these prophecies. A figurative fulfilment.

Hosea 7:16 / Hosea 8:13 with **Hosea 9:3 / 2 Kings 17:1-6.** The prophet speaks of Israel going into captivity in Egypt. The fulfilment of this however is captivity in Assyria. A figurative and literal fulfilment. Captivity, literal, Egypt, figurative.

We see from this and from what we have seen in the book of Ezekiel already, that we should not necessarily be surprised to come across figurative language in the Bible. God is pleased to use it as he wants. We need not be afraid of figurative speech but be willing to accept it as part of God's revelation to man.

However, we should not go overboard and seek to figurize everything we read. We must also work at understanding how to handle non-literal speech in the Bible.

When do we figurize?

Jim McGuiggan in his book gives 4 guiding principles for figurizing which are helpful. When do we figurize a passage or statement? If understanding it literally:

Results in an absurd conclusion. **Matthew 8:22 / Luke 13:32.**

Results in an immoral conclusion. **Luke 14:25ff.**

Results in a contradiction of a Bible writer's interpretation. e.g. **Malachi 4:5** with **Matthew 17:11.**

Results in a contradiction of plain scripture. e.g. Priesthood question, **Ezekiel 44:15** with **Hebrews 7:11ff.**

We must work at understanding non-literal speech so as to understand it correctly. Sometimes we find something that can be used as a figure to mean different things in the same or different places. e.g. Sleep

In **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11** sleep is used figuratively twice in these verses to refer to two different meanings.

1. Sleep, **1 Thessalonians 5:4-7** refers to the sinner in a lost state.

2. Sleep, **1 Thessalonians 5:10** it refers to physical death. **Matthew 27:52 / John 11:11-14.**

It is good Bible study to figurize scripture when required to. Sometimes it may take hard Bible study to work out whether we have literal or non-literal speech.

In relation to **Ezekiel 34-48**, it is not then unreasonable to figurize in this section. But to understand this section as applying to the Messianic period we are forced to look for a total figurative interpretation. It does mean that these chapters are not immediately relevant to the remnant in exile in 586 B.C.

Of course, by that argument neither was **Isaiah 53** relevant to the Jews in 700 B.C. If we accept this understanding, we must see this as a promised blessing for a future generation of Jews. It would make it the largest single Messianic prophecy of all.

3. The Restoration of the Remnant.

Those who go this way would suggest both a literal and a figurative explanation. A glance at the events and buildings etc. outlined in these chapters makes it clear that it is not possible to literally place them in the history of the Jews from 539 B.C. Some of these things then must be figuratively understood.

However, the principles of return to the land, rebuilding of a temple, etc. can be literally accepted. e.g. It is literally true that the Jews who returned were given a new temple, but it is spoken of in a figurative way in the prophecy.

This is a simple enough view of the chapters, but it is not without its problems. **Ezekiel 34** talks of a king. But never was there a king until Jesus. None of the high priests who often ruled during this time, not even any of the Hashmoneans ever took the title king. Certainly, the Idumeans, Herod's family, could not be who **Ezekiel 34** is talking about.

What then do we make of these chapters? Do we understand this all literally? What then of **Ezekiel 38-39**? Do we understand it all figuratively?

But we are not forced to take it all so, some prophecies came literally true. It would seem possible to take the two latter suggestions and consider a dual fulfilment, i.e. a fulfilment for the remnant and a fulfilment through the Messiah.

Perhaps two points, simple but important might be kept in mind:

1. These chapters must refer to a future from 586 B.C. and therefore must be to have a different message to Ezekiel 1-33.
2. These chapters must have some relevance to the remnant in Babylon other than a Messianic promise. Ezekiel was so much a prophet in his time as were all the prophets.

In considering this it would be good for us to remind ourselves of the attitude and feelings of the people in Babylon at this time. **Psalm 137** sums up this to some extent.

OUTLINE OF EXILE'S FEELINGS IN THIS PSALM:

They have lost their dignity. **Psalm 137:3.**

They are separated from the temple services. **Psalm 137:1-3.**

They are removed from the land and city of God. **Psalm 137:5-6.**

Their enemies have overcome them. **Psalm 137:7-9.**

There were of course those amongst the exiles who perhaps were never too concerned about the moral and spiritual implications of their exile. But certainly, the righteous Jew would feel the pressure of the judgement of God upon them.

They had lost a land, city, freedom, their ability to worship Jehovah in the temple, their royal line was no longer sovereign in Judah, they were humiliated by defeat, and many believed, totally forsaken by God.

So, to these broken people, God comes through Ezekiel to offer them hope for the future, to comfort the people. The best way he can do that is to offer them back all that they had lost and all that they held dear. To sum up this, God makes 5 promises to them in these chapters, which we will now outline, but also makes a condition.

5 PROMISES, MEANS 5 COVENANTS

1. Royalty restored.

If the Jew could have any king, he wanted he would ask for David without hesitation. God will restore the right of the family of Judah to rule again. This is **Ezekiel 34**.

2. Property restored.

If the Jew could have any land he wanted he would ask for promised land. Not a piece of Babylonia, but that promise to Abraham's descendants. **Genesis 13:14-17 / Exodus 23:31**. This is **Ezekiel 34-36**.

3. Unity and dignity restored.

This they had lost to the Babylonians. They had been trodden under by Nebuchadnezzar and scattered throughout the empire and were taunted by their captors. **Psalm 137:3**. This after they had split themselves in two. They humiliated themselves, and then had been humiliated by the Babylonians. They wanted to take their place again amongst the nations round about them. This is **Ezekiel 37**.

4. Security restored.

The first three would be no use without this one. They had those, but Nebuchadnezzar took them away from them. So, God promises them His protection against any enemy. This is Ezekiel 38-39.

5. Religious system restored.

Then we get a picture of the temple, priesthood, sacrifices and all that goes along with the Jewish system, brought back. This is Ezekiel 40-48. One condition Every promise given by God is conditional upon something; there is always the 'if' clause. Deuteronomy 28:15ff / Psalm 89:30ff / Colossians 1:23 / Hebrews 2:1ff. This was one of the big mistakes the Jews prior to 586 B.C. had made, to miss or ignore the condition in God's covenants.

So as God makes them these promises for the future, he also puts conditions down. He asks of them, holiness. Ezekiel 43:1-12. There is no doubt they were short on holiness before 586 B.C. God says that after 586 B.C. you are going to have to live holy lives. This holiness is described in the form of keeping the law. Ezekiel 45:10 / Ezekiel 46:11ff.

It seems to me that this section has a dual fulfilment. There is a part literal, part figurative fulfilment for the remnant, and a totally figurative fulfilment for the Jew in the Messiah and His kingdom.

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AND DESTRUCTION OF GOG OF MAGOG. EZEKIEL 34-39

SUMMARY OF EZEKIEL 34

A condemnation of the shepherds of Israel. A new, true shepherd is coming. The sheep are promised a pasture. Ezekiel now deals with a prophecy about the lost sheep of Israel. Ezekiel summarizes the basic message of his entire ministry, that Israel's spiritual leaders have led the people to slaughter.

God is going to gather his scattered people back to Palestine, as Canaan will become known. and that one day he will raise up a Saviour for his people, the Messiah, who will be the good shepherd.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So, they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them. 'Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them. Ezekiel 34:1-10

THE NO-GOOD SHEPHERDS

Why does God say prophecy against the shepherds of Israel? As if no one knew, Ezekiel outlines the way the leaders of Judah had failed miserably. This is not just the odd mistake of a leader which is condemned, but a deliberately chosen wrong attitude and way of leading.

‘You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with wool’. It was the shepherd’s job to feed the sheep, instead, they fed themselves. It was their job to look after the weak, they looked after themselves, instead of feeding the flock they had fleeced it, and so on. These shepherds did not do their job and therefore they lost it, God took it from them.

This was accomplished with the end of the shepherding of Zedekiah in 586 B.C. The idea of shepherding the flock goes back a long way and perhaps David being the shepherd king, identified it even more closely, **2 Samuel 5:2 / Psalm 78:70-71**.

The shepherd is not only in a position of responsibility it is a position of trust and confidence, and if he turns out to be an unworthy shepherd for whatever reason the people will suffer. They scatter because they had no shepherd.

‘For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.’ Ezekiel 34:11-16

JEHOVAH WILL BE SHEPHERD

God himself will take on the job of shepherding his people Israel. He will seek his flock and gather it together from dispersion, lead it to good pasture, and sift it by the destruction of the bad sheep. After Zedekiah, no king ruled in Judah. Ezekiel 21:25-27.

‘As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?’ Ezekiel 34:17-19

THE CHIEF SHEPHERD

God will act justly as a shepherd unlike those before him. Any who are wicked will be judged by this shepherd, there will be justice.

‘Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.’ Ezekiel 34:20-24

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

God also shows he is going to delegate the work of the shepherd to someone else. A prince of the dynasty of David was to be their shepherd. He is here called a prince as was Zedekiah in **Ezekiel 12:10 / Ezekiel 21:25**. Certainly not for the same reason. Perhaps as Ellison says, ‘the use of NASI is meant to stress that God’s king will not obscure the kingship of God, he will represent, not misrepresent Him’.

However, the name shepherd is obviously used metaphorically, and so is forced to mean king, for it is always so used. There was no better king than David until Jesus came. **Matthew 21:41ff**.

‘I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of savage beasts so that they may live in the wilderness and sleep in the forests in safety. I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them. They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid. I will provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations. Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign LORD. You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ **Ezekiel 34:25-31**

THE NEW COVENANT

Blessing for the people. The Sheep are promised a pasture. Under a new, true shepherd, God promised them a good future with him as their shepherd. Their land will be restored.

God promises three things:

1. Security.
2. Fruitfulness.
3. Blessings.

The wild beast will be banished, **Isaiah 11**. They will lie down with man.

CHAPTER 35

INTRODUCTION

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE DESTINY OF EDOM AND ISRAEL. EZEKIEL 35-36

SUMMARY OF EZEKIEL 35

Edom is condemned for her lust for land. The land of Palestine is promised restoration. The people are promised restoration. During the siege, Ezekiel brought judgment against Judah's oppressors, particularly for the glee with which they would welcome the fall of Jerusalem. Using Edom to represent all the nations. Ezekiel again promises that destruction awaits them. He then consoles Israel with more assurances of the national restoration.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir; prophesy against it and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you and make you a desolate waste. I will turn your towns into ruins and you will be desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD. 'Because you harboured an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity, the time their punishment reached its climax, 6 therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will give you over to bloodshed and it will pursue you. Since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you. I will make Mount Seir a desolate waste and cut off from it all who come and go. I will fill your mountains with the slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines. I will make you desolate forever; your towns will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD.' Ezekiel 35:1-9

EDOM CONDEMNED

The whole chapter has one thought. The Edomites are to be judged for taking or at least desiring to take possession of God's land. They were trespassing and would be removed.

God will influence the events of history in order to bring Edom to a close. Being the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, the Edomites were continually the antagonists of Israel. From the time the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity, to the time of their demise in the destruction of Jerusalem, the Edomites shed the blood of the Israelites, [Numbers 20:18](#).

When Israel was coming to a close with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Edomites murdered many Israelites who escaped from the destruction of Jerusalem and fled toward Edom, read Obadiah. The Edomites rejoiced over the doom of Israel, [Obadiah 12](#). Because they showed no mercy for God's people, God would show no mercy toward them, [James 2:13](#). Edom as a nation would be terminated from history.

They lived by the sword, and by the sword, they would die. They were a cruel race of people. Herod the Great was an Edomite. Centuries after this prophecy of Ezekiel, Herod the Great, and those who descended from Herod, were designated by the Romans to reign over the Jews in Palestine immediately before the birth of Jesus. It was an effort by the Romans to humiliate the Jews who were living in Palestine at the time of the birth of Jesus.

'Because you have said, 'These two nations and countries will be ours and we will take possession of them,' even though I the LORD was there, therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will treat you in accordance with the anger and jealousy you showed in your hatred of them and I will make myself known among them when I judge you. Then you will know that I the LORD have heard all the contemptible things you have said against the mountains of Israel. You said, 'They have been laid waste and have been given over to us to devour.' You boasted against me and spoke against me without restraint, and I heard it. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. Because you rejoiced when the inheritance of Israel became desolate, that is how I will treat you. You will be desolate, Mount Seir, you and all of Edom. Then they will know that I am the LORD.' Ezekiel 35:10-15

THE DESIRE OF EDOM

For God to promise the children of Israel their land again. He had to remove the trespassers, Edom. Read the book of Obadiah for the problems between Israel and Edom and what God did about it.

Before the birth of Jacob and Esau, God told Rebekah that there were two nations in her womb, [Genesis 25:23](#). These two nations were the Edomites and Israelites. Israel followed after God, but the Edomites followed after false gods, [Obadiah 2](#).

They followed after the character of their father who was a profane person, [Hebrews 12:16](#). God would render to them that which they had done to others, [Romans 12:19](#). The Edomite nation would be made desolate, but the Jews would be restored to their land.

CHAPTER 36

INTRODUCTION

SCORN TO REPAY SCORN

‘Son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, ‘Mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The enemy said of you, ‘Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession.’ Therefore prophesy and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because they ravaged and crushed you from every side so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations and the object of people’s malicious talk and slander, therefore, mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign LORD: This is what the Sovereign LORD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, to the desolate ruins and the deserted towns that have been plundered and ridiculed by the rest of the nations around you—this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my burning zeal I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, for with glee and with malice in their hearts they made my land their own possession so that they might plunder its pastureland.’ Therefore, prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I speak in my jealous wrath because you have suffered the scorn of the nations. Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I swear with uplifted hand that the nations around you will also suffer scorn.’ Ezekiel 36:1-7

THE LAND WILL AGAIN BE FRUITFUL

After a reminder of the reason for their punishment, Ezekiel shows the people that they will be restored to a fruitful land. Note again that the mountains are addressed, but of course the message is for the people.

Ezekiel had previously revealed condemnation of Mount Seir, [Ezekiel 35:3](#). Now he revealed blessing for the mountains of Israel. The mountains stood for all the land. The land, including its mountains, valleys and rivers, was the sustenance of the nation of Israel.

The rest of the nations were land grabbers. Once the Israelites were taken from the land, countries as Edom grabbed the land. Because of the apostasy, God had taken His people from the land. However, when He took His people from

their inheritance, He did not permanently give it over to other nations. The message of hope in this context was that the mountains and valleys would again be productive for the people of God.

‘But you, mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. I am concerned for you and will look on you with favour; you will be ploughed and sown, and I will cause many people to live on you—yes, all of Israel. The towns will be inhabited, and the ruins rebuilt. I will increase the number of people and animals living on you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I will cause people, my people Israel, to live on you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children.’ Ezekiel 36:8-12

ISRAEL TO PROSPER

Though others took possession of the land, the promise was that the land would again bring forth its fruit for the people of God. All twelve tribes would again enjoy their occupation of the land after King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire released the exiles in 536 B.C.

The promise was that the cities of the land would be rebuilt, not just the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was important to the returnees, but it was not the only city that was rebuilt. In fact, according to the history that is given by Ezra and Nehemiah, the completion of the reconstruction of Jerusalem came after the rebuilding of many other cities in the land. There is no emphasis here on the rebuilding of the temple.

Their prosperity in the land would be the sign that God was again with them.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because some say to you, ‘You devour people and deprive your nation of its children,’ therefore you will no longer devour people or make your nation childless, declares the Sovereign LORD. No longer will I make you hear the taunts of the nations, and no longer will you suffer the scorn of the peoples or cause your nation to fall, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 36:13-15

TAUNTS WILL CEASE

The other nations were saying that Israel orphaned herself of children. But this reproach of the nation would cease. Neither the people, nor the land, would bear the disgrace that was brought on the land through their apostasy.

Through repentance and restoration, the Israelites would not become the victims of themselves. They would no longer be a reproach and a derision among the nations.

God says of the land that in the future it will be:

1. Secure. [Ezekiel 36:15](#).
2. Fruitful. [Ezekiel 36:8](#).
3. Peaceful. [Ezekiel 36:14](#).

‘Again, the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman’s monthly uncleanness in my sight. So, I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was

said of them, 'These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.' I had concern for my holy name, which the people of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone. 'Therefore, say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.' Ezekiel 36:16-23

HOLY NAME HONOURED

The Reason for punishment and the reason for Restoration. We again are reminded by the prophet of the reasons for Judah losing her land in the first place. With a familiar figure of unclean woman, God shows the remnant that their idolatry and ungodliness caused Him to remove them from their land. The exile was a direct result of their sin, but it was carried out by the hand of God.

However, their exile caused God's name to be profaned among the nations. The nations believed God was not able to take care of his people which was evidenced in their exile. It seemed as if Babylon's gods were more powerful than the God of Israel. This local deity concept was common amongst the people at this time. [Isaiah 36:18ff](#) / [1 Kings 20:23ff](#) / [2 Kings 5:17](#).

'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, people of Israel!' Ezekiel 36:24-32

A NEW SPIRIT

God proves He is strong by returning them to the land. The people would be cleansed of their former sins because of their repentance from their idolatrous past. They would once again be His holy people, [Leviticus 11:44](#) / [1 Peter 1:15-16](#).

It would be a humbled heart. The purpose for the captivity of Israel was not simply punishment. If we do not understand that God was working to preserve a remnant of Israel in order to re-establish their identity for the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, then we have missed the point.

In order to re-establish the identity of Israel, they had to be humbled through captivity. This was God putting a new heart and spirit within them. They had to voluntarily submit to His will, realizing that the only way out of captivity was through humble submission to Him.

Once this was accomplished after the first generation of captives died, then through scribes such as Ezra, with the leadership of spiritual men like Nehemiah, the humble and dedicated could be brought back into the land in order to prepare for the coming Messiah and Saviour of the world.

‘I will put My Spirit within you’, this statement would possibly take these promises beyond the restoration of the captives to the land after the Babylonian captivity. The prophecy possibly looks to the fulfilment of [Joel 2:28-32](#). God poured out the Holy Spirit on the apostles in [Acts 2](#), afterwards filling His people with the Spirit upon their obedience to the Gospel, [Acts 2:38](#).

However, the meaning would also be applicable from the time of the restoration to the coming of the Messiah, the time when God did not work through prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets.

The Old Testament prophets were sent in order to call Israel back to God from their idolatry. But after the return, they would need no message as was given to them by the Old Testament prophets. God caused them to go through the cleansing of the captivity by humiliating the proud and arrogant idolaters.

Since we would also interpret this to refer to a restoration of the people to return to God, then we would assume that the teaching of [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#), would apply to this prophecy. The new heart would be the people’s desire for God alone.

They would no longer give themselves over to false gods that they had created after their own imaginations. They would be restored to the one true God and thus made to be His people. Because they would give their hearts to God, God would not bring famine and pestilence on them in an effort to turn them from their sin. Thus, the nations would never again mock them because their God had brought punishment on them for their sin.

When restored to the land, the generation of Israelites that would return would look back on the idolatry of their fathers and loathe the behaviour of their fathers. They would realise that their fathers brought independent Israel down because they ran after false gods.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, ‘This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.’ Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.’ Ezekiel 36:33-36

A GREAT REPLANTING

Prosperity is promised by God in the land to which they have returned. We are again shown that God is the motivating factor in the restored blessings. It seems that God is just as determined to restore their fortunes now as He was to waste the city in the earlier part of the book.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Once again I will yield to Israel’s plea and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep, as numerous as the flocks for offerings at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals. So, will the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 36:37-38

REPOPULATION OF THE NATION

Not only will the cities prosper and multiply, but the people are also promised prosperity. There is a willingness on God’s part now to listen to the people and even give them what they are asking of him. When a nation was conquered in ancient times and taken into captivity, that was the end of the nation.

However, in the case of Israel, God would resurrect His people out of captivity and re-establish them as a people within their land that had been given to them one thousand years before. When this would happen, then all the nations would perceive that the God of Israel was the true God of heaven.

CHAPTER 37

INTRODUCTION

RESURRECTION OF ISRAEL AND REUNION AS ONE NATION.

SUMMARY

The vision of the valley of dry bones. The sign of the joining of the two sticks. God brings a fascinating vision to Ezekiel in demonstration of the new life which Israel will have. The visual image, of dry bones.

‘The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ I said, ‘Sovereign LORD, you alone know.’ Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’ So, I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’ So, I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.’ Ezekiel 37:1-10

THE VISION OF DRY BONES

The Dry Bones coming to life must bring a smile to Ezekiel’s face as he now relates the vision. Here is where the spiritual comes from. About the only well-known part of Ezekiel, which is a great pity. We are again witnessing a vision situation. The prophet clearly indicates that this is happening.

Here the nation is given new life, for they are pictured as being dead, completely dead, you can’t get more dead than dry bones. The prophet is taken to a valley full of ‘very dry’ bones. He is asked to prophesy to the bones and to thereby make them come to life. A strange request perhaps, but by now this man would probably be ready to do anything.

Obedying the Lord's command Ezekiel prophecies to the bones and things start happening.

1. The bones come together. Ezekiel 37:7.
2. The sinews and flesh came on the skeletons. Ezekiel 37:8.
3. They came to life. Ezekiel 37:10.

‘Then he said to me: ‘Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore, prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’ Ezekiel 37:11-14

THE EXPLANATION

The bones represent the people of Israel in Babylon. They are to be brought back to life by God. There is a clear likeness to a resurrection in this vision which indicates the state of the nation. They are said to be in the grave, the bones are very dry and dried up, as a nation they are beyond anything they can do for themselves. God must resurrect them, if they are to have any hope.

Their undignified position as dry bones scattered throughout the land of Babylon is coming to an end. The God of Israel will cause them to stand once more upright, in their own land, once again with dignity.

Another sign is to be shown to the people. Two sticks, one representing the Northern tribes and the other depicting the tribe of Judah, are to be held together to signify the reunification of the nation of Israel. This is followed by a messianic prophecy of the new kingdom to come.

‘The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, ‘Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.’ Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, ‘Belonging to Joseph (that is, to Ephraim) and all the Israelites associated with him.’ Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand. ‘When your people ask you, ‘Won’t you tell us what you mean by this?’ say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim’s hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him and join it to Judah’s stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand.’ Hold before their eyes the sticks you have written on and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God.’

Ezekiel 37:15-23

THE SIGN OF THE TWO STICKS

On two sticks the prophet writes the name of Judah on one and Joseph, or perhaps Ephraim, on the other stick. Numbers 17:1ff. Why these two names?

It would seem that these represent the two kingdoms. Judah and Ephraim being the strongest tribes in both kingdoms after the division.

It is also fair to say that most of the kings of the north came from Ephraim, and all in the south came from Judah. That the kings are in view here might be borne out by [Ezekiel 37:24](#). The prophet is to take these two sticks and join them together making one. Perhaps here are two sticks which he had picked up and had been one but broken in two, so that they joined well together.

On the Hebrew word for 'one', Bullinger says, 'echad' is so used because it does not mean absolute unity, but a compound unity. Always one of the others which make up the one. Its first occurrence is in [Genesis 1:5](#), 'The first day', of seven. [Genesis 2:11](#), 'The name of the first is Pison', i.e. one of four. [Genesis 2:21](#), 'He took one of his ribs.' [Genesis 2:24](#), 'They two shall be one flesh.'

Hence when it is used twice, the word being repeated, 'one, one', it is translated both one and the other, but it is always one where there are others. Hence sometimes each, as in [Numbers 7:85](#). [Genesis 49:16](#), 'as one of the (twelve) tribes of Israel'. [Numbers 13:23](#), 'A branch with one cluster of (many) grapes.'

Even have the plural 'echadim', like Elohim, ones. In speaking of the two sticks representing the houses of Israel and Judah, it says, [Ezekiel 37:19](#) 'they will become one in my hand'. [Psalm 34:20](#) 'he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.'

In all these and other places echad is composite. It is one of others, and hence it is the word used in [Deuteronomy 6:4](#). Jehovah (the Father), Elohim (the Son), and Jehovah (the Spirit) is echad. One Triune God.' E. W. Bullinger, Number in Scripture.

Here is a picture or a sign of national unity.

'My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.' Ezekiel 37:24-28

THE EXPLANATION OF THE SIGN, THE NEW KINGDOM

The explanation is not that the Bible and the Book of Mormon will one day be used side by side. On that ludicrous interpretation we say no more. It clearly is said to refer to a united kingdom in Palestine again. This they had lost many years before and was the perfect picture of a restored kingdom. Not only dignified again, but also unified.

Only one king will suffice under these circumstances, David. Not Solomon, for he caused the kingdom to divide, but David under whom the nation would become glorious again.

CHAPTER 38

INTRODUCTION

YAHWEH'S FINAL TRIUMPH OVER THE NATIONS, THE DESTRUCTION OF GOG WITH HIS GREAT ARMY OF NATIONS. EZEKIEL 38-39

SUMMARY

The army of Gog prepares for an expedition. The defeat of Gog. The responses to the defeat. The climax of Ezekiel's prophecies takes his hearers not only to the new kingdom of the good shepherd, but apparently to a time when the forces of evil will be destroyed forever.

The language is apocalyptic, that is symbolically predictive of future events and challenging to interpret. The forces of evil are represented by Gog, ruler of a land called Magog, and by Meshech and Tubal. These names correspond to the sons of the Patriarch Japheth, who have been associated with the warlike Goths, Cretans and Sythians.

God's vision to Ezekiel is that of a great battle on a wide panorama of the universe in which the death and destruction are cataclysmic, far beyond anything that either Judah or Israel had experienced. But the reasons for the destruction are the same, rebellion and wickedness. The other difference is that the punishment will be eternal in nature. At that time there will be no restoration of the wicked, only everlasting peace and joy for the righteous.

The summary gives us an outline of the events in these two chapters. Let us follow the events, and then try to decide the purpose of these chapters.

'The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you.' Ezekiel 38:1-6

THE COMING OF GOG

This figure, Gog, is seen amassing an army of his own and making alliances with others to assemble a huge force to come against Israel. Persia, Cush (Ethiopia), Put and Gomer are said to be with him. These four nations appear in the east, south, west and north of Israel respectively. So, they are coming on Israel from all sides.

Magog was a land to the north of Palestine. It included the regions of Meshech and Tubal. Some have assumed that Gog was Gyges, 690-657 B.C., king of Lydia in Asia Minor. Others have assumed that Gog was Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonian Empire. Some have suggested that the reference is to Alexander the Great who took control of Palestine in the latter part of the 4th century. Still, others have suggested that Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, is pictured, for he was the one who defiled Israel's sacrificial ceremonies in the early part of the 2nd century.

However, if this context is apocalyptic, then the identity of Gog as a specific person is meaningless. He simply represents any force that would set himself or itself against the people of God. In view of the statements in [Ezekiel](#)

39:25-29, reference in the prophecy of these two chapters is to a time after the return of the captives from Babylonian captivity.

The historical events look forward from the return to the coming of Jesus for His earthly ministry. This is an apocalyptic picture of any attack against God's people, and thus an encouragement to the returnees that they should never again fear a force that would destroy them.

Others would come, but they would not defeat and scatter them as in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The prophecy was not only against Gog to the north of Palestine but also against Persia to the east and Ethiopia and Libya to the south. All the nations surrounding Israel after the return are here warned not to trouble God's people, for He will bring judgment on them for harming His people.

‘Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.’ Ezekiel 38:7-9

HORDES OF EVIL

It is obviously a huge army as it is described as ‘many peoples’ and ‘hordes’, ‘covering the land’. In the prophecy, Gog is representative of all enemies who would set themselves against Israel. Since Israel was restored to Palestine, the major trading route of the time, then the trading nations to the north and south of Israel are judged for the trouble that they would bring to God's people.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. You will say, ‘I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the centre of the land.’ Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages will say to you, ‘Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?’ Ezekiel 38:10-13

EVIL COVETS THE RIGHTEOUS

The desire of Gog is to kill, plunder and spoil. God says to Gog however, that He, Jehovah, will be vindicated through Gog. It is difficult in the prophecy to determine exactly what nation would be represented by Gog. Though we may not understand the specific identity of Gog, and the country of Magog, the central meaning of the prophecy is clear.

Gog would represent any king who would set himself against God's people. Magog would be representative of any kingdom that would seek to again assimilate God's people to the loss of their identity. All such kings and kingdoms would fail in their attempt to annihilate God's people.

‘Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my

people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes. Ezekiel 38:14-16

THE BATTLE TO BE THE SIGN

From the time of the return of the remnant to Palestine, which began in 539 B.C., to the time of the coming of Jesus, the land of Palestine was occupied by the Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans. All these empires subdued the people of God. However, the attack of Gog, who represented all enemies of the people of God, would come to no avail.

God's people would continue to maintain their identity as Jews until the coming of the Messiah.

The fact that they maintained their identity as a culture of people, proved that God had set them apart, sanctified, as His people through whom the Saviour would be brought into the world. Every effort to terminate Israel from history, therefore, would fail.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You are the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel. At that time, they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them. This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. In my zeal and fiery wrath, I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble, and every wall will fall to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulphur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so, I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.’ Ezekiel 38:17-23

THE DEFEAT OF GOG

This defeat is carried out by Jehovah, not by the people of Israel. They are defeated by earthquake, [Ezekiel 38:19-20](#), by making them kill each other, [Ezekiel 38:20](#), pestilence, [Ezekiel 38:22](#), and various things falling from heaven, [Ezekiel 38:22](#).

The meaning of the prophecy was that God works for His people. In the case of any attack upon God's people, it is not stated that it would be His people who would take up arms and defend themselves against the attacker. It is stated that God would raise up all that would be necessary in order to thwart the plans of the attacker of His people.

Thus, God would work nation against nation in order that no nation ever again conquer His people. God would do all this in order to exalt His name among the nations.

CHAPTER 39

INTRODUCTION

THE DAY IS COMING AGAINST GOG

‘Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right hand. On the mountains of Israel, you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD. ‘I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of.’ Ezekiel 39:1-8

In this context, the invading hostile force against God’s people is described in detail. Regardless of the strength of forces against God, He, with a simple strike, dismantles their power. They are laid bare to be devoured by birds and beasts. Because the evil forces are so easily defeated, God’s people conclude that only He could have been the source of their defeat.

‘Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up—the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD. ‘On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east of the Sea. It will block the way of travellers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So, it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog. ‘For seven months the Israelites will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I display my glory will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD. People will be continually employed in cleansing the land. They will spread out across the land and, along with others, they will bury any bodies that are lying on the ground. ‘After the seven months they will carry out a more detailed search. As they go through the land, anyone who sees a human bone will leave a marker beside it until the gravediggers bury it in the Valley of Hamon Gog, near a town called Hamonah. And so, they will cleanse the land.’ Ezekiel 39:9-16

FINALITY OF DESTRUCTION

After the defeat, the people of Israel go out to pick up the pieces. They are able to use Gog’s weapons for fires which will last for 7 years. Note the weapons are spears, shields, bows and arrows, etc. The people are also given the job of burying the dead. The coastal plain, of Palestine, is given as a burial ground, and it takes them 7 months to bury all the bodies of Gog’s defeated army.

‘Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: ‘Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan. At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are glutted and drink blood till you are drunk. At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,’ declares the Sovereign LORD. Ezekiel 39:17-20

THE AFTERMATH

Though God used invading forces to punish Israel for their iniquity, He sacrificed, set apart, the invading forces in order to restore and spare His people. Assyria and Babylon were used as His proxy judgment against Israel. Assyria and Babylon, however, were conquered in order to restore the people to the land. Both Assyria and Babylon were evil forces against God's people.

However, they arrogantly marched against the people of God. Because of their arrogance, they were sacrificed for the benefit of the restoration of the people of God. Israel's deliverance from the evil forces that were against her is the occasion for belief among the nations.

'I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay on them. From that day forward the people of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God. And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So, I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face from them.' Ezekiel 39:21-24

ISRAEL'S EXAMPLE OF JUDGMENT

Every living thing from smallest to greatest will see that God has done all this and will glorify his name. That will be the response of all people. The nations thought it was the end of Israel when she was taken into captivity. But when the powers that took her into captivity were terminated, she was restored to her land.

The historical miracle of her restoration became the opportunity for the honest historian to conclude that God was still working through His people.

'Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.' Ezekiel 39:25-29

RESTORATION OF SPIRIT

The section ends with a promise of restoration and one of protection for the people of God once they are back in the land God would give to them. Leave my people alone or suffer the consequences.

This clear historical conclusion to the apocalyptic revelation of [Ezekiel 38-39](#) places the setting of the events at the time of Israel's captivity and restoration. Evil forces symbolized by Gog and Magog were brought against God's people. They were defeated by God once He had used them for His purpose.

That purpose was concluded with the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire. Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian Empire released the captives, and thus the faithful in Israel concluded that there was only one God.

All their false gods and their false prophets had been proven wrong. God's prophets had been proven true. And thus, Israel knew that God caused both their captivity and return. They knew that God did what He said He would do if they forsook His covenant with them.

TWO THOUGHTS

1. The Identity of Gog.

There are about as many interpretations of this as there are men to write about it. I list only a few.

Gog means the Russians in a yet future invasion of a restored Israel during, or before the 1000 literal years reign of Christ in Jerusalem.

This is based on several things but certainly on a belief that the term 'rosh' in [Ezekiel 38:2](#), is a root of the word Russia. This however is not necessarily so. The word literally means head or topmost, hence the RSV and others say, chief prince. Lindsay and most Premillennialists.

Gog means the Seleucids led by Antiochus IV Epiphanies.

This Greek was the last great oppression suffered by restored Israel before the end of the Old Covenant. W. Hendriksen.

Gog means a past invasion by the Sythians, supposedly called Magogites, which would serve as an illustration of God's protection for the future. Josephus, Barnes.

Gog means the Antichrist.

Gog is simply another name for, and these events describe how he will oppose God sometime in the future. Lang.

Gog means a figurative army of immense and non-literal dimensions which shows Israel restored that if Jehovah can beat this size of the opposition, they need fear nothing. McGuiggan.

Gog means all armies of Israel's enemies from Ezekiel's time, or the return of the remnant, to the time of the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus. Hailey.

2. The Purpose of these chapters.

Having already ruled out any possible reference to the yet future and believing that this had a direct relevance for the remnant we narrow down the purpose.

What was Ezekiel trying to tell them? Is this a literal section or not?

The size of the army, the use of the number 7 in relation to the burning of the weapons and the burying of the dead, would seem to suggest not. In Hebrew, seven is, shevah. It is from the root word, savah, and means to be full or satisfied, have enough of. Bullinger.

Here is indeed a complete army, if these cannot beat Israel and remove them from the land, no one can. Babylon did, these cannot. Security is promised by God for the remnant from 539 B.C. to A.D. 33 and from A.D. 33 onward.

GOG AND MAGOG IN THE REVELATION OF JOHN

‘And when the thousand years are ended, Satan shall be.....’ Revelation 20:7

Satan changes the tactics that he used earlier, working through one great imperial power, backing a crass form of worship such as emperor worship. But he does use one of the means that has helped him have control from the beginning, deceit.

Both Satan and the false prophets are portrayed in Revelation as deceivers, [Revelation 12:9](#) / [Revelation 20:3](#) / [Revelation 13](#) / [Revelation 14](#) / [Revelation 19:20](#). It comes as no surprise that upon Satan’s release from the abyss he returns to his nefarious activity. Satan shall come forth to deceive the nations for the purpose of gathering them together to war.

It is important to note here that Satan deceives these nations into waging war with him. He gathers his forces by deceit, the nations which fall prey to Satan’s propaganda are said to be in ‘the four corners of the earth’.

This figure of speech is not intended to stress some ancient cosmology but to emphasize universality. [Isaiah 11:12](#) / [Ezekiel 7:2](#) / [Revelation 7:1](#).

His battle may be another HarMaggedon, a decisive battle, but it is not the battle of [Revelation 16:14-16](#), that one had long since been fought, [Revelation 19:19-21](#). This is a continuation of the same war that has been raging through the centuries, but it is a new battle.

The evangelist here has a literal dependency on the names employed by the earlier prophet. Gog and Magog stand for the great host of the nations and their leaders who would break forth into uncalled for hostility against the people of the Lord.

It must be remembered that the imagery is derived from the history of Israel. Jerusalem the beloved city of the true Israel of God, looks upon her foes. They are Babylon, Egypt or they may come from the far northern regions, the abode of Gog and Magog, whence the wild and relentless invaders had poured upon the land.

Gog and Magog are thus used as typical names. Under the auspices of such, the great gathering of turbulent and reckless enemies of the faith would take place. The hosts of the foes of Jerusalem are described as innumerable as the sand of the sea. This great concourse of countless hosts is moved by hostility to the faith of Christ.

John has in mind the last great attack of evil on the things of God. Satan will gather all his henchmen. He will assemble the greatest possible number to oppose God, the number of whom is the sand of the sea. This is the decisive moment, the final battle.

As in Ezekiel, the use of the term can be stated as such, Gog and Magog are enemies of God and His people. But eventual in both cases God is triumphant over them.

Hailey says that the battle will be a moral and spiritual one, in revelation, and he goes on to say that, ‘Satan’s Gog and Magog symbolise such forces and agencies as atheism, humanism, communism, materialism, anarchy, corruption etc.’

In other words, all the things that Satan will use in an effort to destroy the church.

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS AND THEORIES

In Ezekiel, as in Revelation, Gog made his appearance after the vindication and glorification of God’s people. In that place as in this the size of the host is staggering, [Ezekiel 39:12-13](#). In that, as in this the defeat is total and takes place without the people of God having to do anything.

Magog according to [Ezekiel 38:6](#), is a territory located in ‘the uttermost parts of the north’.

In Revelation, however, both Gog and Magog are symbolic figures representing the nations of the world that band together for a final assault upon God and his people. No specific geographical locations are intended. They are simply hostile nations from all across the world.

CHAPTER 40

INTRODUCTION

The new kingdom of God. Ezekiel 40-48

The new temple, its extent and splendour. Ezekiel 40-43

SUMMARY

The structure and measurements of the Temple. The Lord returns to the Temple. The measurements and consecration of the altar.

EZEKIEL’S GREAT TEMPLE VISION

It has been some 12 years since any recorded word of the Lord has come to Ezekiel. In what seems to be a mere continuation of his previous futuristic vision, Ezekiel now sees the great Temple. The vision reminds one in many ways, particularly in its attention to detail, of two earlier descriptions, of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and Solomon’s magnificent Temple in Jerusalem.

The similarity suggests that, to the people of Israel, one of the most important features of the restoration is the rebuilding of the now ruined Temple. Ezekiel’s prophecy must surely give renewed hope to the downcast nation, yet his vision casts another image far beyond the time when the nation shall be re-established, and the Temple rebuilt.

It becomes clear when it is realised that the new Temple will not have the physical beauty or dimensions of the one it replaces. There is also a great difference between the religious service in the Temple. There will be no Ark of the Covenant, No Golden Lampstand, No bread of the presence, and no Veil. There is no observance of the Feast of Weeks, No day of Atonement, that holiest of holy days.

Nor will the Levites serve as they had served under Moses’ Law. Although there will still be priests, there will be no high priests. Instead, there will be a ‘prince’ or succession of ‘princes’. Who will offer sacrifices on behalf of the people?

What Ezekiel is about to be shown is something far different from anything he or his people would have known at this time. As he was at the beginning of his ministry, Ezekiel is once again taken by the hand of the Lord to the Land of Israel.

There he is shown symbolically the new Temple to come, its worship rituals, its celebrations, its servants and priests, its laws, and the division of the land surrounding it.

‘In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the LORD was on me and he took me there. In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. The man said to me, ‘Son of man, look carefully and listen closely and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the people of Israel everything you see.’ Ezekiel 40:1-4

EZEKIEL TAKEN TO ISRAEL

Again, we begin by noting that the prophet is receiving a vision. He is brought to Jerusalem, probably, and sees a man with a measuring reed in his hand. This man is to show Ezekiel something which the prophet is then to relate to the remnant.

Ezekiel dates these prophecies in 572 B.C., fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. In the vision God wanted Ezekiel to see the restored Jerusalem. Thus, the angel took Ezekiel to Jerusalem in order that he might see in vision what he would never see in life, for he would be dead by the time this vision was fulfilled. But to give hope to the captives, he was to tell what he saw to the people throughout the Babylonian Empire.

This is what he sees measured, the Temple. The outer court, with boundary wall, gate, buildings, chambers. Ezekiel 40:5-27

THE EAST GATE

‘I saw a wall completely surrounding the temple area. The length of the measuring rod in the man’s hand was six long cubits, each of which was a cubit and a handbreadth. He measured the wall; it was one measuring rod thick and one rod high. Then he went to the east gate. He climbed its steps and measured the threshold of the gate; it was one rod deep. The alcoves for the guards were one rod long and one rod wide, and the projecting walls between the alcoves were five cubits thick. And the threshold of the gate next to the portico facing the temple was one rod deep. Then he measured the portico of the gateway; it was eight cubits deep and its jambs were two cubits thick. The portico of the gateway faced the temple. Inside the east gate were three alcoves on each side; the three had the same measurements, and the faces of the projecting walls on each side had the same measurements. Then he measured the width of the entrance of the gateway; it was ten cubits and its length was thirteen cubits. In front of each alcove was a wall one cubit high, and the alcoves were six cubits square. Then he measured the gateway from the top of the rear wall of one alcove to the top of the opposite one; the distance was twenty-five cubits from one parapet opening to the opposite one. He measured along the faces of the projecting walls all around the inside of the gateway—sixty cubits. The measurement was up to the portico facing the courtyard. The distance from the entrance of the gateway to the far end of its portico was fifty cubits. The alcoves and the projecting walls inside the gateway were surmounted by narrow parapet openings all around, as was the portico; the openings all around faced inward. The faces of the projecting walls were decorated with palm trees.’ Ezekiel 40:5-16

A wall around the whole area forming a square. Ezekiel 40:5 / Ezekiel 42:20.

THREE GATES, NORTH, SOUTH, EAST. EZEKIEL 40:6-27

The literal Hebrew word is ‘house,’ and thus can be translated as ‘house’ throughout the remainder of these chapters. Since the word ‘house’ would metaphorically refer to the abiding place of God among His people, the physical symbol of the temple is used in prophecy to look forward to the house of God, the church, 1 Timothy 3:15.

A cubit is about eighteen inches or forty-five centimetres. The rod is about ten and a half feet or a little over three meters. In this chapter, the angel measured for the returnees the places for the restored sacrifices. When the return of the exiles happened, they would reinstitute sacrifices at the temple.

THE OUTER COURT HAS 30 CHAMBERS

‘Then he brought me into the outer court. There I saw some rooms and a pavement that had been constructed all around the court; there were thirty rooms along the pavement. It abutted the sides of the gateways and was as wide as they were long; this was the lower pavement. Then he measured the distance from the inside of the lower gateway to the outside of the inner court; it was a hundred cubits on the east side as well as on the north.’ Ezekiel 40:17-19

THE NORTH GATE

‘Then he measured the length and width of the north gate, leading into the outer court. Its alcoves—three on each side—its projecting walls and its portico had the same measurements as those of the first gateway. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Its openings, its portico and its palm tree decorations had the same measurements as those of the gate facing east. Seven steps led up to it, with its portico opposite them. There was a gate to the inner court facing the north gate, just as there was on the east. He measured from one gate to the opposite one; it was a hundred cubits.’ Ezekiel 40:20-23

THE SOUTH GATE

‘Then he led me to the south side and I saw the south gate. He measured its jambs and its portico, and they had the same measurements as the others. The gateway and its portico had narrow openings all around, like the openings of the others. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Seven steps led up to it, with its portico opposite them; it had palm tree decorations on the faces of the projecting walls on each side. The inner court also had a gate facing south, and he measured from this gate to the outer gate on the south side; it was a hundred cubits.’ Ezekiel 40:24-27

The inner court with its gates, chambers and slaughtering tables. Ezekiel 40:28-47.

GATES TO THE INNER COURT

‘Then he brought me into the inner court through the south gate, and he measured the south gate; it had the same measurements as the others. Its alcoves, its projecting walls and its portico had the same measurements as the others. The gateway and its portico had openings all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. (The

porticoes of the gateways around the inner court were twenty-five cubits wide and five cubits deep.) Its portico faced the outer court; palm trees decorated its jambs, and eight steps led up to it. Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gateway; it had the same measurements as the others. Its alcoves, its projecting walls and its portico had the same measurements as the others. The gateway and its portico had openings all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Its portico faced the outer court; palm trees decorated the jambs on either side, and eight steps led up to it. Then he brought me to the north gate and measured it. It had the same measurements as the others, as did its alcoves, its projecting walls and its portico, and it had openings all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. Its portico faced the outer court; palm trees decorated the jambs on either side, and eight steps led up to it.’ Ezekiel 40:28-37

ROOMS FOR PREPARATION

‘A room with a doorway was by the portico in each of the inner gateways, where the burnt offerings were washed. In the portico of the gateway were two tables on each side, on which the burnt offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings were slaughtered. By the outside wall of the portico of the gateway, near the steps at the entrance of the north gateway were two tables, and on the other side of the steps were two tables. So, there were four tables on one side of the gateway and four on the other—eight tables in all—on which the sacrifices were slaughtered. There were also four tables of dressed stone for the burnt offerings, each a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half wide and a cubit high. On them were placed the utensils for slaughtering the burnt offerings and the other sacrifices. And double-pronged hooks, each a handbreadth long, were attached to the wall all around. The tables were for the flesh of the offerings.’ Ezekiel 40:38-43

Notice the Altar of burnt offering is in the middle.

ROOMS FOR THE PRIESTS

‘Outside the inner gate, within the inner court, were two rooms, one at the side of the north gate and facing south, and another at the side of the south gate and facing north. He said to me, ‘The room facing south is for the priests who guard the temple, and the room facing north is for the priests who guard the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who are the only Levites who may draw near to the LORD to minister before him.’ Ezekiel 40:44-46

COURT AND ALTAR

‘Then he measured the court: It was square—a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide. And the altar was in front of the temple.’ Ezekiel 40:47

THE PORTICO, TEN STEPS

‘He brought me to the portico of the temple and measured the jambs of the portico; they were five cubits wide on either side. The width of the entrance was fourteen cubits and its projecting walls were three cubits wide on either side. The portico was twenty cubits wide, and twelve cubits from front to back. It was reached by a flight of stairs, and there were pillars on each side of the jambs.’ Ezekiel 40:48-49

Ezekiel is given this revelation in order to bring hope to the captives, reassuring them that though the temple had been destroyed, and the temple sacrifices terminated, they would in the years to come to be reinstated.

The purpose of the revelation, therefore, was to bring encouragement to the discouraged captives in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It is difficult not to understand that these prophecies look beyond the physical restoration of Israel to the land of Palestine.

In our hindsight view of the establishment of the church, we can see the symbolism of the physical return of God's people to the land of Palestine as a metaphor that would refer to the establishment of the church in Acts 2.

CHAPTER 41

INTRODUCTION

THE TEMPLE. HOUSE, WITH PORCH, SIDE STORIES, AND BACK BUILDINGS. EZEKIEL 40:48-41:26

When reading this vision of a rebuilt temple, we should keep in mind that a permanent temple for Israel was not in the original plan of God. When Israel was still at the foot of Mount Sinai, God, through Moses, gave instructions to Israel to build a tabernacle or tent. The instructions were given in detail in order that Israel to rebuild the tabernacle throughout their years in the land of promise.

The tabernacle represented the presence of God among the people, and before it, they were to assemble yearly. The tabernacle was to be moved among the people in order that no tribe be marginalized for the annual sacrifice during the day of atonement.

However, when David became king, God gave a concession to him that he builds a permanent structure to house the ark of the covenant. David was not allowed to build the temple, but Solomon, his son, did, 1 Kings 6-7. Solomon's temple, therefore, marginalized the tribes to the north in Palestine, and thus after Solomon's death Jeroboam built two altars, one in Bethel and the other in Dan, 1 Kings 12:29.

In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solomon's temple. In the return of the remnant, God knew that the remnant would remain small in the land, and thus the rebuilding of the temple that is described in these chapters would suffice in providing a location to which the returned exiles could go for the annual sacrifices, Deuteronomy 12:21.

THE OUTER SANCTUARY

‘Then the man brought me to the main hall and measured the jambs; the width of the jambs was six cubits on each side. The entrance was ten cubits wide, and the projecting walls on each side of it were five cubits wide. He also measured the main hall; it was forty cubits long and twenty cubits wide.’ Ezekiel 41:1-2

See also Ezekiel 41:15b and Ezekiel 41:21-26. A cubit is about eighteen inches or forty-five centimetres. The rod is about ten and a half feet or a little over three meters.

MOST HOLY PLACE

‘Then he went into the inner sanctuary and measured the jambs of the entrance; each was two cubits wide. The entrance was six cubits wide, and the projecting walls on each side of it were seven cubits wide. And he measured the length of the inner sanctuary; it was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits across the end of the main hall. He said to me, ‘This is the Most Holy Place.’ Ezekiel 41:3-4

THE WALL AND SIDE ROOMS

‘Then he measured the wall of the temple; it was six cubits thick, and each side room around the temple was four cubits wide. The side rooms were on three levels, one above another, thirty on each level. There were ledges all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side rooms, so that the supports were not inserted into the wall of the temple. The side rooms all around the temple were wider at each successive level. The structure surrounding the temple was built in ascending stages, so that the rooms widened as one went upward. A stairway went up from the lowest floor to the top floor through the middle floor. I saw that the temple had a raised base all around it, forming the foundation of the side rooms. It was the length of the rod, six long cubits. The outer wall of the side rooms was five cubits thick. The open area between the side rooms of the temple and the priests’ rooms was twenty cubits wide all around the temple. There were entrances to the side rooms from the open area, one on the north and another on the south; and the base adjoining the open area was five cubits wide all around. The building facing the temple courtyard on the west side was seventy cubits wide. The wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its length was ninety cubits.’ Ezekiel 41:5-12

THE TEMPLE MEASUREMENTS

‘Then he measured the temple; it was a hundred cubits long, and the temple courtyard and the building with its walls were also a hundred cubits long. The width of the temple courtyard on the east, including the front of the temple, was a hundred cubits. Then he measured the length of the building facing the courtyard at the rear of the temple, including its galleries on each side; it was a hundred cubits.’ Ezekiel 41:13-15

THE DECORATIONS

‘The main hall, the inner sanctuary and the portico facing the court, as well as the thresholds and the narrow windows and galleries around the three of them—everything beyond and including the threshold was covered with wood. The floor, the wall up to the windows, and the windows were covered. In the space above the outside of the entrance to the inner sanctuary and on the walls at regular intervals all around the inner and outer sanctuary were carved cherubim and palm trees. Palm trees alternated with cherubim. Each cherub had two faces: the face of a human being toward the palm tree on one side and the face of a lion toward the palm tree on the other. They were carved all around the whole temple. From the floor to the area above the entrance, cherubim and palm trees were carved on the wall of the main hall.’ Ezekiel 41:15-20

TABLE AND DOORS

‘The main hall had a rectangular doorframe, and the one at the front of the Most Holy Place was similar. There was a wooden altar three cubits high and two cubits square; its corners, its base and its sides were of wood. The man said to

me, 'This is the table that is before the LORD.' Both the main hall and the Most Holy Place had double doors. Each door had two leaves—two hinged leaves for each door. And on the doors of the main hall were carved cherubim and palm trees like those carved on the walls, and there was a wooden overhang on the front of the portico. On the sidewalls of the portico were narrow windows with palm trees carved on each side. The side rooms of the temple also had overhangs.' Ezekiel 41:21-26

The dimensions of the temple were different from those of Solomon's temple. This temple would exist until Herod the Great, who would later build what was referred to as Herod's Temple. This temple would be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and would never be rebuilt again.

Because of Ezekiel's use of the word 'forever,' it may be that these instructions concerning the restoration of the sacrifices and rebuilding of the temple were symbolic of the spiritual temple of God, the church, that would come a little over 400 years after the last return of the captives to Palestine.

At least we know that when Jesus came, no emphasis was placed on a continuation of the temple, for true worship would take place anywhere in the world, regardless of any physical structures, **John 4:23-24**. In fact, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple structure that stood at the time of His ministry, **Matthew 24**.

One of the great lessons that the Jews learned while in exile was that they could worship God without the presence of a temple structure. When they returned to rebuild the temple, therefore, they rebuilt it in order to unite the people around the sacrifices that were to be continued until the coming of the final sacrifice of the Son of God.

While in captivity, it is believed that the Jews developed the idea of the synagogue. It is difficult to determine the origins of the synagogue, for the structure and function of the synagogue are found nowhere in the Old Testament. The Jews in captivity possibly built the synagogues for the purpose of solidifying their religious identity and culture throughout the world where they had been scattered.

The concept of the synagogue thus came with the returnees in view of the fact that the rebuilt temple still marginalized those in Palestine who were too far from the temple, **Deuteronomy 12:21**.

Instead of a restoration of the mobile tabernacle, the Jews built synagogues throughout Palestine. Since they had built synagogues throughout the land of their captivity, the synagogue became a customary cultural and religious centre of Israel.

Every region, therefore, had a synagogue where sacrifices and teaching could take place. The synagogue thus became an opportunity for world evangelism in the early days of the church, **Acts 17:2**.

CHAPTER 42

INTRODUCTION

THE HOLY CHAMBERS IN THE COURT, AND THE EXTENT OF THE HOLY DOMAIN AROUND THE TEMPLE

We shouldn't be frustrated in interpreting the description of the temple that is given here. Because the Hebrew text varies in different places it is difficult in some places for the translator to bring over into another language to the details of the Hebrew text. We do understand that these instructions were given through Ezekiel in order that the returnees after the Babylonian captivity would have some guidelines concerning the reconstruction of the temple.

USE OF PRIEST'S ROOMS

'Then the man led me northward into the outer court and brought me to the rooms opposite the temple courtyard and opposite the outer wall on the north side. The building whose door faced north was a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide. Both in the section twenty cubits from the inner court and in the section opposite the pavement of the outer court, gallery faced gallery at the three levels. In front of the rooms was an inner passageway ten cubits wide and a hundred cubits long. Their doors were on the north. Now the upper rooms were narrower, for the galleries took more space from them than from the rooms on the lower and middle floors of the building. The rooms on the top floor had no pillars, as the courts had; so, they were smaller in floor space than those on the lower and middle floors. There was an outer wall parallel to the rooms and the outer court; it extended in front of the rooms for fifty cubits.

While the row of rooms on the side next to the outer court was fifty cubits long, the row on the side nearest the sanctuary was a hundred cubits long. The lower rooms had an entrance on the east side as one enters them from the outer court. On the south side along the length of the wall of the outer court, adjoining the temple courtyard and opposite the outer wall, were rooms with a passageway in front of them. These were like the rooms on the north; they had the same length and width, with similar exits and dimensions. Similar to the doorways on the north were the doorways of the rooms on the south. There was a doorway at the beginning of the passageway that was parallel to the corresponding wall extending eastward, by which one enters the rooms. Then he said to me, 'The north and south rooms facing the temple courtyard are the priests' rooms, where the priests who approach the LORD will eat the most holy offerings. There they will put the most holy offerings—the grain offerings, the sin offerings and the guilt offerings—for the place is holy. Once the priests enter the holy precincts, they are not to go into the outer court until they leave behind the garments in which they minister, for these are holy. They are to put on other clothes before they go near the places that are for the people.' Ezekiel 42:1-14

See also [Ezekiel 46:19f](#). A cubit is about eighteen inches or forty-five centimetres. The rod is about ten and a half feet or a little over three meters.

God knew that the temple had been so completely destroyed that the returnees would not have an idea as to how they should rebuild it. No guidelines or blueprint for building the temple were given for the construction of Solomon's temple. It is believed that Solomon built his temple after the model of Canaanite temples that were contemporary with Solomon.

OUTER TEMPLE AREA

'When he had finished measuring what was inside the temple area, he led me out by the east gate and measured the area all around: He measured the east side with the measuring rod; it was five hundred cubits. He measured the north side; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. He measured the south side; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. Then he turned to the west side and measured; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. So, he measured the area on all four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to separate the holy from the common.' Ezekiel 42:15-20

The returnees, were so repentant concerning their sin of idolatry, that they did not want in any way to rebuild the temple in a manner that would resemble or reflect the pattern of any pagan temples. In order to ease their minds, therefore, God revealed these basic instructions concerning the reconstruction in order that they are confident that the rebuilding was according to the will of God.

Both Ezra and Nehemiah, who led returns and reconstruction after the Babylonian captivity, could follow the basic instructions given in these contexts in order to reaffirm to the people that the rebuilding was according to the plan and direction of God.

CHAPTER 43

INTRODUCTION

Return of Jehovah, the entrance of the glory of the Lord into the new temple. Ezekiel 43:1-12.

Glory enters the temple. Ezekiel 43:1-5.

The holiness of the temple. Ezekiel 43:6-9.

Visions for the sinner's shame. Ezekiel 43:10-11.

The surrounding area is holy. Ezekiel 43:12.

Description and consecration of the altar of burnt offering. Ezekiel 43:13-27.

The altar. Ezekiel 43:13-17.

Dedication of the altar. Ezekiel 43:18-27.

Here is a picture of the restoration of the Jewish religious system. It is imperative for the remnant to know this will happen to be assured that he can be ceremoniously clean. Haggai 2:10ff. Not only that but the Lord will come back and will once again place his throne there.

Here we find the condition of this restoration, holiness, Ezekiel 43:6-12.

We see how the people had defiled themselves:

1. Harlotry.
2. Dead bodies of their kings.
3. Idolatry.
4. Setting their doorposts by Jehovah's doorposts.

So, they were not only wrongdoers, but wrong thinkers in relation to God. They had become too familiar with God. They did not recognise that there should have been a reverent separateness from Jehovah. Hence this temple is totally separated from the city. Ezekiel 40:5 / Ezekiel 42:20 / Ezekiel 43:12.

The plan will make them ashamed, Ezekiel 43:10, so that they realise they are to be holy, and recognise God as holy. Separateness is at the root of holiness; the people had mingled too much in the past. Familiarity breeds contempt.

For you and I. 1 Peter 1:15 / 1 Corinthians 15:33.

‘Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. He said: ‘Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The people of Israel will never again defile my holy name—neither they nor their kings—by their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings at their death. When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a

wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So, I destroyed them in my anger. Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings, and I will live among them forever. ‘Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider its perfection, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations. ‘This is the law of the temple: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the law of the temple.’ Ezekiel 43:1-12

The glory of the Lord fills all the earth, **Isaiah 6:3**. God reveals His glory in order to manifest His approval and presence. The vision that Ezekiel saw on this occasion was similar to other times when he experienced the awesome presence of God, **Ezekiel 1:26-28 / Ezekiel 8:1-2 / Ezekiel 9:1-3**.

What was experienced on this occasion was the divine glory of God that was manifested in Ezekiel’s vision of the temple. His glory came into the reconstructed temple from the east, signifying that God was still present with His people in captivity in Babylonian territory east of Palestine. He would be with them when they returned from captivity to rebuild the temple.

When the people forsook idolatry, God came again into their presence while they were in captivity. God’s presence, therefore, was not confined to a physical temple. His presence with His people exists wherever they are in the world.

The awesomeness of God cannot be compared to or associated with man in his most pure state of being. In the past, the Israelites had built their houses joined to the temple. In the restored temple, they were not to defile the presence of God by doing such. Man cannot exalt himself to be compared with God as he had done with the idol gods that he had created after his own imagination.

The awesomeness of the presence of God should be so revered that we would fear His presence and stand in awe of His glory. If men seek to personalise God to the point that they lose their fear of His awesomeness, they may be creating a god after their own imagination. When God was incarnate in the flesh of man, He had to empty Himself of His divine form in order for man to be able to stand in His presence, **Philippians 2:5-8**.

God is personal to us through Jesus, but we should never forget that if we stood within the energy of His total glory we would be disintegrated into nothingness as in a nuclear blast. The One who created the millions of suns of the universe is millions of times greater in energy than all the universe combined, for He is greater than that which He created.

‘These are the measurements of the altar in long cubits, that cubit being a cubit and a handbreadth: Its gutter is a cubit deep and a cubit wide, with a rim of one span around the edge. And this is the height of the altar: From the gutter on the ground up to the lower ledge that goes around the altar it is two cubits high, and the ledge is a cubit wide. From this lower ledge to the upper ledge that goes around the altar it is four cubits high, and that ledge is also a cubit wide.

Above that, the altar hearth is four cubits high, and four horns project upward from the hearth. The altar hearth is square, twelve cubits long and twelve cubits wide. The upper ledge also is square, fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide. All around the altar is a gutter of one cubit with a rim of half a cubit. The steps of the altar face east.’ Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: These will be the regulations for sacrificing burnt offerings and splashing blood against the altar when it is built: You are to give a young bull as a sin offering to the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who come near to minister before me, declares the Sovereign LORD. You are to take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of the upper ledge and all around the rim, and so purify the altar and make atonement for it. You are to take the bull for the sin offering and burn it in the designated part of the temple area outside the sanctuary. ‘On the second day you are to offer a male goat without defect for a sin offering, and the altar is to be purified as it was purified with the bull. When you have finished purifying it, you are to offer a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect. You are to offer them before the LORD, and the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and sacrifice them as a burnt offering to the LORD. ‘For seven days you are to provide a male goat daily for a sin offering; you are also to provide a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect. For seven days they are to make atonement for the altar and cleanse it; thus, they will dedicate it. At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt

offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 43:13-

27

In the vision, Ezekiel sees the restoration of the temple ceremonies that were conducted by the priests, the descendants of Zadok, Ezekiel 43:19 / Ezekiel 44:15 / 1 Kings 1:7-8.

In connection with the offerings that were made, the priests were to sprinkle salt, signifying that the people would keep the covenant. The blood was sprinkled in order to sanctify and set apart, all that was reconstructed for the offering of the sacrifices.

Before the people could continue with the altar and temple they had to cleanse and dedicate it to the Lord. After the cleansing, the people could be accepted, and thus the sacrifices that they would make would be accepted.

CHAPTER 44

INTRODUCTION

REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NEW COMMUNITY. EZEKIEL 44-48

SUMMARY

The rules of the sanctuary. A river flows from the Temple. The boundaries and division of the land. Again, we have a continued picture of restored Jewish religious activities. Circumcision, the Zadokite priesthood, the division of the land for the priests and instructions for the sacrifices which the priests were to carry out.

Position of the different classes of the people in relation to the new sanctuary. Ezekiel 44:1-14.

The privilege of the prince. Ezekiel 44:1-3.

Uncircumcised excluded. Ezekiel 44:4-9.

Limitations on Levites. Ezekiel 44:10-14.

The priests, their conduct and support. Ezekiel 44:15-45:12.

Priests of Zadok’s ancestry. Ezekiel 44:15-16.

Priest’s garments. Ezekiel 44:17-19.

Restrictions on priests. Ezekiel 44:20-24-31.

Priests to be judges. Ezekiel 44:24.

No possession for priests. Ezekiel 44:28-30.

‘Then the man brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, the one facing east, and it was shut. The LORD said to me, ‘This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside

the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way.’ Ezekiel 44:1-3

The reason the gate is shut is because the Lord entered the temple through the gate. And since it was shut, the Lord would never again leave His holy place among His people. In their former state of idolatry, their sun worship was reflected in their opening of the door in order to allow the ray of the rising sun to enter the temple. But in their restoration, this door is never to be opened. The prince, as a representative of the nation, the prince would eat alone in the sanctified gateway.

‘Then the man brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple. I looked and saw the glory of the LORD filling the temple of the LORD, and I fell facedown. The LORD said to me, ‘Son of man, look carefully, listen closely and give attention to everything I tell you concerning all the regulations and instructions regarding the temple of the LORD. Give attention to the entrance to the temple and all the exits of the sanctuary. Say to rebellious Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Enough of your detestable practices, people of Israel! In addition to all your other detestable practices, you brought foreigners uncircumcised in heart and flesh into my sanctuary, desecrating my temple while you offered me food, fat and blood, and you broke my covenant. Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge of my sanctuary. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is to enter my sanctuary, not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites.’ Ezekiel 44:4-9

Since the temple had previously been defiled by idolatrous worship and idols, the Lord gives instructions as to who is permitted to enter the temple. From this time, no uncircumcised person was to administer at the temple.

Though non-Israelites previously administered at the temple, this would be changed, for God did not want anyone who was uncircumcised in heart to appear before Him on behalf of the people. In this way, He sought to guard Israel against the influence of idolatrous people.

Foreigners had introduced idolatrous worship into Israel, beginning with Solomon and his many foreign wives. And thus, in their future God would not allow this to happen again.

‘The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin. They may serve in my sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and serving in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before the people and serve them. But because they served them in the presence of their idols and made the people of Israel fall into sin, therefore I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign LORD. They are not to come near to serve me as priests or come near any of my holy things or my most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices. And I will appoint them to guard the temple for all the work that is to be done in it.’ Ezekiel 44:10-14

The Levites will bear their iniquity, in this case, the consequences of the sins of the fathers were passed on to the children. Because the Levites’ fathers did not assume their spiritual leadership in order to direct the people according to the law of God, they were banned from doing again that which was assigned to them under the law. Thus, the menial work that was previously assigned to foreigners before the temple, was given to the Levites.

Because the Levitical priests succumbed to idolatry, they are here assigned to be the gatekeepers, butchers and servants at the table. Since they had failed in their duties to keep the people from idolatry, they were stripped of the duties that were given to them under the law and given responsibility that did not entail spiritual leadership.

When the return of the exiles eventually came after the Babylonian captivity, among the 40,000 exiles who returned, there were more than 4,000 priests.

However, among this number, there were only 74 Levites who wanted to leave their comfortable homes in Babylon in order to perform menial tasks at the temple worship, **Ezra 2 / Psalm 84:10**. Because there were so few Levites after the return, it was necessary that the Nethinim be called to perform the new duties of the Levites, **Ezra 8:15-20**.

‘But the Levitical priests, who are descendants of Zadok and who guarded my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me; they are to stand before me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares the Sovereign LORD. They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister before me and serve me as guards. ‘When they enter the gates of the inner court, they are to wear linen clothes; they must not wear any woollen garment while ministering at the gates of the inner court or inside the temple. They are to wear linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They must not wear anything that makes them perspire. When they go out into the outer court where the people are, they are to take off the clothes they have been ministering in and are to leave them in the sacred rooms, and put on other clothes, so that the people are not consecrated through contact with their garments. ‘They must not shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but they are to keep the hair of their heads trimmed. No priest is to drink wine when he enters the inner court. They must not marry widows or divorced women; they may marry only virgins of Israelite descent or widows of priests. They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean. ‘In any dispute, the priests are to serve as judges and decide it according to my ordinances. They are to keep my laws and my decrees for all my appointed festivals, and they are to keep my Sabbaths holy. ‘A priest must not defile himself by going near a dead person; however, if the dead person was his father or mother, son or daughter, brother or unmarried sister, then he may defile himself. After he is cleansed, he must wait seven days. On the day he goes into the inner court of the sanctuary to minister in the sanctuary, he is to offer a sin offering for himself, declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 44:15-27

For more on Zadok, read **2 Samuel 15:24-35** / **1 Chronicles 15:11** / **1 Chronicles 16:39**. The symbolism of the garments was to manifest the ceremonial cleanliness of the people. Linen was considered more clean than wool, and thus the sanctification of the people throughout the land was to be symbolized by the best clothing that could be made by man.

This prohibition of shaving their heads, or not allowing their hair to grow long, was probably a restriction that again was in view of former idol worship.

We must understand that the changes that are given in this context were given in response to the people’s former behaviour in reference to former idolatrous practices. In order to change the thinking of the people, God wanted to prohibit every behavioural characteristic that was associated with idolatrous worship, **1 Corinthians 8**.

The priest was to be a teacher among the people, **Deuteronomy 33:10**. He was a judge in disputed matters, **Deuteronomy 17:9** / **Deuteronomy 19:17**.

The priest was to keep the ceremonial laws in order to manifest the people’s obedience to the moral laws of God.

When the people kept the sabbaths, they were indicating their obedience to all the laws of God. There was no cleansing power in the ceremonial laws, nor in keeping the sabbaths. But their obedience to the laws manifested their willingness to submit themselves to God.

‘I am to be the only inheritance the priests have. You are to give them no possession in Israel; I will be their possession. They will eat the grain offerings, the sin offerings and the guilt offerings; and everything in Israel devoted to the LORD will belong to them. The best of all the firstfruits and of all your special gifts will belong to the priests. You are to give them the first portion of your ground meal so that a blessing may rest on your household. The priests must not eat anything, whether bird or animal, found dead or torn by wild animals.’ Ezekiel 44:28-31

Read **Deuteronomy 10:9**. The priests were to be full-time in their service to the people. In order for them to do this, they were to be given the offerings of grain and animals, and everything that was dedicated to the Lord.

They were to be given the first fruits of the land, and all contributions that were necessary in order that they and their families to be able to give themselves totally to the administration of the temple service and teaching of the people. **Exodus 22:31**.

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

Sacred land. Ezekiel 45:1-5.

Land for the city. Ezekiel 45:6.

Prince's land. Ezekiel 45:7-8.

Justice of princes. Ezekiel 45:8-12.

Sacrifices and sacred days. Ezekiel 45:13-46:15.

Offerings from the people. Ezekiel 45:13-16.

Prince's role in offerings. Ezekiel 45:17.

Sin offerings. Ezekiel 45:18-20.

Passover. Ezekiel 45:21-25.

‘When you allot the land as an inheritance, you are to present to the LORD a portion of the land as a sacred district, 25,000 cubits long and 20,000 cubits wide; the entire area will be holy. Of this, a section 500 cubits square is to be for the sanctuary, with 50 cubits around it for open land. In the sacred district, measure off a section 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. In it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and who draw near to minister before the LORD. It will be a place for their houses as well as a holy place for the sanctuary. An area 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide will belong to the Levites, who serve in the temple, as their possession for towns to live in.’ Ezekiel 45:1-5

SACRED LAND

When the Jews are restored to the land, there was to be an allotment of land for the sanctuary, to the priests, the prince and the city. The land was to be divided by allotment, thus assuring that there would be a fair division of the land. We would assume that the original records of the borders and inheritances of the land were destroyed when Jerusalem was burned by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.

The instructions in this context, therefore, were a new beginning for the allotment of the land. The allotment for the Lord was first, **Matthew 6:33**. In order to maintain reverence for the allotment dedicated to the Lord, space was given in order that no one build or go into this space. The Levites would be given a specific area for their dwelling that would facilitate their ministry at the temple.

‘You are to give the city as its property an area 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, adjoining the sacred portion; it will belong to all Israel. ‘The prince will have the land bordering each side of the area formed by the sacred district and the property of the city. It will extend westward from the west side and eastward from the east side, running lengthwise from the western to the eastern border parallel to one of the tribal portions. This land will be his possession in Israel. And my princes will no longer oppress my people but will allow the people of Israel to possess the land according to their tribes. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have gone far enough, princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing my people, declares the Sovereign LORD. You are to use accurate scales, an accurate ephah and an accurate bath. The ephah and the bath are to be the same size, the bath containing a tenth of a homer and the ephah a tenth of a homer; the homer is to be the standard measure for both. The shekel is to consist of twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels equal one mina.’ Ezekiel 45:6-12

Land ownership was a right throughout the history of Israel. Land ownership prevented dominant individuals from taking control of the land, and subsequently developing a totalitarian state and oppressing the poor. There were very few poor people in Israel for its first five hundred years of history in the land. Only when dominant individuals started ignoring the agricultural land laws of the individual did poverty become a problem.

In order to guarantee fair treatment of the poor, and to guarantee land ownership, the people were to use fair scales and specific measurements in order to protect the individual citizen from the oppression of the greedy.

The leaders were to deal fairly with the people, and not use their positions as an opportunity to oppress the people, **Ezekiel 34:131**. Civil leaders who use their positions in order to oppress the people will suffer the judgment of God. The exact amounts of these measures are generally not known today.

‘This is the special gift you are to offer: a sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat and a sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley. The prescribed portion of olive oil, measured by the bath, is a tenth of a bath from each cor (which consists of ten baths or one homer, for ten baths are equivalent to a homer). Also, one sheep is to be taken from every flock of two hundred from the well-watered pastures of Israel. These will be used for the grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the people, declares the Sovereign LORD. All the people of the land will be required to give this special offering to the prince in Israel. It will be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths—at all the appointed festivals of Israel. He will provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the Israelites. ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In the first month on the first day you are to take a young bull without defect and purify the sanctuary. The priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the upper ledge of the altar and on the gateposts of the inner court. You are to do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who sins unintentionally or through ignorance; so, you are to make atonement for the temple.’ **Ezekiel 45:13-20**

The instructions concerning the restoration of the sacrificial ceremonies in reference to the leadership of the prince are the focus of this context. In the re-establishment of the ceremonies of the law, we must keep in mind that God was seeking to consolidate the faith of Israel in the land in preparation for the coming Messiah.

Since the tabernacle was not reinstated as the point of assembly for the annual sacrifices, the temple was rebuilt in order to be the point of reference for the sacrifices that pertained to all the people.

The sanctuary was to be ceremonially cleansed twice a year, on the first and seventh months of the year. The giving of life, thus the offering of blood, was to be used to symbolize purification, **Hebrews 10:1-4**.

‘In the first month on the fourteenth day you are to observe the Passover, a festival lasting seven days, during which you shall eat bread made without yeast. On that day the prince is to provide a bull as a sin offering for himself and for all the people of the land. Every day during the seven days of the festival he is to provide seven bulls and seven rams without defect as a burnt offering to the LORD, and a male goat for a sin offering. He is to provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull and an ephah for each ram, along with a hin of olive oil for each ephah. ‘During the seven days of the festival, which begins in the seventh month on the fifteenth day, he is to make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings and oil.’ **Ezekiel 45:21-25**

There are differences between what God reveals in this context concerning the Passover and what was revealed in the law as stated in **Deuteronomy 16**. The feast of Weeks is not mentioned here, but this does not mean that it was not kept. The purpose of Deuteronomy was to restate the principles and statutes of the law. However, this was not the purpose of the revelation here.

The focus of Ezekiel was on the sin of the people and their forgiveness. Because the Jews were in a process of restoration from a total apostasy to idolatry, what Ezekiel reveals is meant to continue and maintain this process of restoration until the coming of the Messiah.

At that time Israel would be assimilated into the worldwide family of God, the church, **Galatians 3:26-29**. They had the complete directions concerning what God wanted as it was revealed in the law.

CHAPTER 46

INTRODUCTION

Sabbath's and new moon. Ezekiel 46:1-8.

Entry and exit. Ezekiel 46:9-10.

Grain and free will offerings. Ezekiel 46:11-12.

Grain and burnt offerings. Ezekiel 46:11-12.

Inheritance of prince's sons. Ezekiel 46:16-18.

Sacrificial kitchens for the priests and for the people. Ezekiel 46:19-24.

Preparation of offerings. Ezekiel 46:19-20.

The kitchens. Ezekiel 46:21-24.

'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The gate of the inner court facing east is to be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day and on the day of the New Moon it is to be opened. The prince is to enter from the outside through the portico of the gateway and stand by the gatepost. The priests are to sacrifice his burnt offering and his fellowship offerings. He is to bow down in worship at the threshold of the gateway and then go out, but the gate will not be shut until evening. On the Sabbaths and New Moons, the people of the land are to worship in the presence of the LORD at the entrance of that gateway. The burnt offering the prince brings to the LORD on the Sabbath day is to be six male lambs and a ram, all without defect. The grain offering given with the ram is to be an ephah, and the grain offering with the lambs is to be as much as he pleases, along with a hin of olive oil for each ephah. On the day of the New Moon he is to offer a young bull, six lambs and a ram, all without defect. He is to provide as a grain offering one ephah with the bull, one ephah with the ram, and with the lambs as much as he wants to give, along with a hin of oil for each ephah. When the prince enters, he is to go in through the portico of the gateway, and he is to come out the same way. 'When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed festivals, whoever enters by the north gate to worship is to go out the south gate; and whoever enters by the south gate is to go out the north gate. No one is to return through the gate by which they entered, but each is to go out the opposite gate. The prince is to be among them, going in when they go in and going out when they go out. At the feasts and the appointed festivals, the grain offering is to be an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram, and with the lambs as much as he pleases, along with a hin of oil for each ephah.' Ezekiel 46:1-11

The restored Israel never again had a God-anointed king to reign over them on earth. In the restored order of ceremonial practices, the 'prince', leader, in this context seems to be a reference to the high priest. At least in the context, he is given the responsibilities that were associated with the high priest under the law.

The prince was to provide the sacrifice from that which was given to him by the people. He was also to provide from his own sources. In making these provisions, he was considered the representative of the people in fulfilling the requirements of the sacrifices.

In reference to the people passing through the temple courtyard, they were to enter one gate and pass through without returning to the gate of entrance. This was a practical rule for the regulation of the traffic of the crowd of people.

Every day a lamb of no more than one-year-old was to be offered. It was to be without blemish, thus symbolizing that purity only can be offered for sin. We must keep in mind that all the blood sacrifices were given in view of the sinless Lamb of God who would give Himself for the sins of man.

In reference to the offerings, we must keep in mind that the sacrifices were eaten by the priests and people. Only a small portion was totally consumed as a burnt offering to the Lord. There was room made for one to give according to his ability. He could give voluntarily according to his ability.

'When the prince provides a freewill offering to the LORD—whether a burnt offering or fellowship offerings—the gate facing east is to be opened for him. He shall offer his burnt offering or his fellowship offerings as he does on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out, the gate will be shut. 'Every day you are to provide a year-old lamb without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD; morning by morning you shall provide it. You are

also to provide with it morning by morning a grain offering, consisting of a sixth of an ephah with a third of a hin of oil to moisten the flour. The presenting of this grain offering to the LORD is a lasting ordinance. So, the lamb and the grain offering, and the oil shall be provided morning by morning for a regular burnt offering. Ezekiel 46:12-15

It was not possible that any blood offering of an animal would take away sins, **Hebrews 10:1-4**. However, the continual offerings continually brought to their minds their sin. When Jesus came, He offered His blood once and for all. And thus, the drudgery of making daily animal sacrifices was done away with.

Jesus' sacrifice was complete and sufficient for all time, **Hebrews 7:26-28**. Christians today have the great blessing of being completely forgiven of sins, as well as not being under the law of ceremonial sacrifices that are outlined in this text, **Romans 7:1-4**.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: If the prince makes a gift from his inheritance to one of his sons, it will also belong to his descendants; it is to be their property by inheritance. If, however, he makes a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, the servant may keep it until the year of freedom; then it will revert to the prince. His inheritance belongs to his sons only; it is theirs. The prince must not take any of the inheritance of the people, driving them off their property. He is to give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that not one of my people will be separated from their property.’ Ezekiel 46:16-18

The prince had full ownership of his estate. He had the right to give it to anyone he chose. However, any part of the estate that was given to his servants was to revert back to the original estate during the year of liberty, **Leviticus 25:10**.

The priestly family was provided for by the people, and thus there was no reason why he should evict people from their land. This unjust practise occurred during the apostasy of God's people, and it was never to happen again in their history, **1 Kings 21:1-16 / Micah 2:9**.

‘Then the man brought me through the entrance at the side of the gate to the sacred rooms facing north, which belonged to the priests, and showed me a place at the western end. He said to me, ‘This is the place where the priests are to cook the guilt offering and the sin offering and bake the grain offering, to avoid bringing them into the outer court and consecrating the people.’ He then brought me to the outer court and led me around to its four corners, and I saw in each corner another court. In the four corners of the outer court were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty cubits wide; each of the courts in the four corners was the same size. Around the inside of each of the four courts was a ledge of stone, with places for fire built all around under the ledge. He said to me, ‘These are the kitchens where those who minister at the temple are to cook the sacrifices of the people.’ Ezekiel 46:19-24

The priests were to prepare food for themselves from the offerings of the people. They would eat it alone. In another place separate from where the priests prepared and ate their food, the Levites prepared the sacrificial meals for the people. This area was built with homes where the Levites could cook the food, and then distribute it to the people.

The sacrificial meals brought the people together with the Levites, whose work it was to teach the people. The sacrifices, therefore, accomplished the purpose of continually bringing the people to the teachers of the law of God.

CHAPTER 47

INTRODUCTION

Distribution of the tribes in the holy land. Ezekiel 47-48.

The temple's river. Ezekiel 47:1-12.

Equal division of the land. Ezekiel 47:13-14.

Outer boundaries. Ezekiel 47:15-20.

Inheritance of aliens. Ezekiel 47:21-23.

‘The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side. As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross.’ Ezekiel 47:1-5

THE TEMPLE’S RIVER

This is the last element in restoring their Mosaic system, this is the final comfort to the remnant. It is done in a perfect picture. Ezekiel 34ff.

THE HEALING RIVER

The origin of the river – the Holy of Holies. Ezekiel 47:1-2.

It is ankle deep. Ezekiel 47:3.

It is knee-deep. Ezekiel 47:4a.

It is loin deep. Ezekiel 47:4b.

Too deep to walk in. Ezekiel 47:5.

There is no tributary, but the river gets bigger and deeper as it flows out of the south side of the sanctuary. Then it turns east and flows to the Dead Sea. As it flows it provides every kind of need the people might have, including making the Dead seawater fresh. From 80% saltwater to freshwater.

Here is a river providing what the people of the land need and it clearly originates from God, the Holy of Holies. Note before, all God wanted to do in the sanctuary was destroy the ungodly leaders. Ezekiel 9:6 / Revelation 22:1f.

‘He asked me, ‘Son of man, do you see this?’ Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, ‘This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so, where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.’ Ezekiel 47:6-12

The blessing that came from the waters was that everything it touched would have life. When Ezekiel came to the banks of the river it had caused the growth of many trees. The apocalyptic symbols portray a garden of Eden environment that is captivating by those wandering in the desert. They are drawn to the river because all necessities for life are provided by the river.

The east country would be a reference to the desert valley of the Jordan River east of the temple. The waters from the Sea of Galilee empty into the Jordan River, which river eventually empties into the Salt Sea, the Dead Sea. The sea is the Mediterranean Sea.

Ezekiel takes the minds of the people, who were at the time in captivity, beyond the hope of their restoration to the land, the rebuilding of the temple, and resettlement in the land. He wrote a prophecy of the Messianic age that they would not fully understand until its fulfilment, **1 Peter 1:10-12**.

However, the returnees knew enough about the symbolism of the prophecy to understand that its fulfilment could not be in the restoration of the people to the land and the rebuilding of the temple.

The prophecy was clear enough to generate anticipation as to things that would come but cryptic enough to stimulate hope for another restoration yet in the future.

‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘These are the boundaries of the land that you will divide among the twelve tribes of Israel as their inheritance, with two portions for Joseph. You are to divide it equally among them. Because I swore with uplifted hand to give it to your ancestors, this land will become your inheritance. ‘This is to be the boundary of the land: ‘On the north side it will run from the Mediterranean Sea by the Hethlon road past Lebo Hamath to Zedad, Berothah and Sibraim (which lies on the border between Damascus and Hamath), as far as Hazer Hattikon, which is on the border of Hauran. The boundary will extend from the sea to Hazar Enan, along the northern border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north. This will be the northern boundary. ‘On the east side the boundary will run between Hauran and Damascus, along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel, to the Dead Sea and as far as Tamar. This will be the eastern boundary. ‘On the south side it will run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then along the Wadi of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. This will be the southern boundary. ‘On the west side, the Mediterranean Sea will be the boundary to a point opposite Lebo Hamath. This will be the western boundary.’ Ezekiel 47:13-20

There should never be any discussion concerning the restoration of a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel to the land after the captivity. Even in apocalyptic language, the metaphor of the restoration of the twelve tribes would mean nothing if a remnant of the twelve tribes did not literally return to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity.

Joseph would have two portions, for from Joseph came the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The limits of the borders would begin with Damascus in the north. On the east, the border would extend through Gilead along the Jordan River to the east side of the Dead Sea. To the south, the border would go west through Kadesh and then to the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean coast would be the border on the west.

‘You are to distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners residing among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you, they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe a foreigner resides, there you are to give them their inheritance,’ declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 47:21-23

INHERITANCE OF ALIENS

In preparation for the Messianic age, these instructions were given to the Jews in order that they allow proselytes to be assimilated into the nation. Proselytes were to be given possession of land, and thus have inheritance rights among the people.

CHAPTER 48

INTRODUCTION

Seven tribes land. (Northern) Ezekiel 48:1-7.

The sacred lands. Ezekiel 48:8-14.

Common land. Ezekiel 48:15-20.

The prince's land. Ezekiel 48:21-22.

Five tribes land. (Southern) Ezekiel 48:23-29.

City gates. Ezekiel 48:30-34.

Total circumference. Ezekiel 48:35b.

The city's name. Ezekiel 48:35b.

One more blessing, the name of the city. This city which Jehovah had disowned because of the ungodliness of its inhabitants was to be once again the city of God. So, it is called, 'THE LORD IS THERE'.

'These are the tribes, listed by name: At the northern frontier, Dan will have one portion; it will follow the Hethlon road to Lebo Hamath; Hazar Enan and the northern border of Damascus next to Hamath will be part of its border from the east side to the west side. 'Asher will have one portion; it will border the territory of Dan from east to west. 'Naphtali will have one portion; it will border the territory of Asher from east to west. 'Manasseh will have one portion; it will border the territory of Naphtali from east to west. 'Ephraim will have one portion; it will border the territory of Manasseh from east to west. 'Reuben will have one portion; it will border the territory of Ephraim from east to west. 'Judah will have one portion; it will border the territory of Reuben from east to west.' Ezekiel 48:1-7

SEVEN TRIBES LAND (NORTHERN)

In this chapter, verses 1-7 and verses 23-27 refer to tribal allotments of the land that were comparable to the allotments that were given when Israel first came into the land. Dan is situated in the far north of Palestine, with Issachar, Zebulun and Gad located in the south. These allotments clearly identify the restoration of the remnant of all twelve tribes to the land after the Babylonian captivity.

'Bordering the territory of Judah from east to west will be the portion you are to present as a special gift. It will be 25,000 cubits wide, and its length from east to west will equal one of the tribal portions; the sanctuary will be in the centre of it. 'The special portion you are to offer to the LORD will be 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. This will be the sacred portion for the priests. It will be 25,000 cubits long on the north side, 10,000 cubits wide on the west side, 10,000 cubits wide on the east side and 25,000 cubits long on the south side. In the centre of it will be the sanctuary of the LORD. This will be for the consecrated priests, the Zadokites, who were faithful in serving me and did not go astray as the Levites did when the Israelites went astray. It will be a special gift to them from the sacred portion of the land, a most holy portion, bordering the territory of the Levites. 'Alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites will have an allotment 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. Its total length will be 25,000 cubits and its width 10,000 cubits. They must not sell or exchange any of it. This is the best of the land and must not pass into other hands, because it is holy to the LORD. 'The remaining area, 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, will be for the common use of the city, for houses and for pastureland. The city will be in the centre of it and will have these measurements: the north side 4,500 cubits, the south side 4,500 cubits, the east side 4,500 cubits, and the west side 4,500 cubits. The pastureland for the city will be 250 cubits on the north, 250 cubits on the south, 250 cubits on the east, and 250 cubits on the west. What remains of the area, bordering on the sacred portion and running the length of it, will be 10,000 cubits on the east side and 10,000 cubits on the west side. Its produce will supply food for the workers of the city. The workers from the city who farm it will come from all the tribes of Israel. The entire portion will be a square, 25,000 cubits on each side. As a special gift you will set aside the sacred portion, along with the property of the city. 'What remains on both sides of the area formed by the sacred portion and the property of the city will belong to the prince. It will extend eastward from the 25,000 cubits of the sacred portion to the eastern border, and westward from the 25,000 cubits to the western border. Both these areas running the length of the tribal

portions will belong to the prince, and the sacred portion with the temple sanctuary will be in the centre of them. So, the property of the Levites and the property of the city will lie in the centre of the area that belongs to the prince. The area belonging to the prince will lie between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin. ‘As for the rest of the tribes: Benjamin will have one portion; it will extend from the east side to the west side. ‘Simeon will have one portion; it will border the territory of Benjamin from east to west. ‘Issachar will have one portion; it will border the territory of Simeon from east to west. ‘Zebulun will have one portion; it will border the territory of Issachar from east to west. ‘Gad will have one portion; it will border the territory of Zebulun from east to west. ‘The southern boundary of Gad will run south from Tamar to the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then along the Wadi of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. ‘This is the land you are to allot as an inheritance to the tribes of Israel, and these will be their portions,’ declares the Sovereign LORD.’ Ezekiel 48:8-29

An interesting point in this text was that the portion given to the Levites was not to be sold or traded, for the allotment was given to the Levites for a perpetual service to the Lord. The location of the temple was about four kilometres south of the original location.

The priests were given the area where the original temple was situated. The city was to be located in the middle of a triangle of land and surrounded by gardens. The city itself was to be built as a square.

Since the measurements of the city would make it about two kilometres long on each side, the size was beyond the actual construction of the city that was accomplished when they returned. It is possible that Ezekiel uses these measurements to picture the spiritual city of God that was yet to come in the Messianic age. The city, and its gates, were a symbol of all of God’s people.

‘These will be the exits of the city: Beginning on the north side, which is 4,500 cubits long, the gates of the city will be named after the tribes of Israel. The three gates on the north side will be the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah and the gate of Levi. ‘On the east side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin and the gate of Dan. ‘On the south side, which measures 4,500 cubits, will be three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar and the gate of Zebulun. ‘On the west side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher and the gate of Naphtali. ‘The distance all around will be 18,000 cubits. ‘And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE.’ Ezekiel 48:30-35

THE CITY’S NAME

The name of the city, ‘the Lord is there,’ is symbolic of a repentant nation. When Israel went into the apostasy of idolatry, the Lord was removed from their hearts. When they repented of their idolatry, the Lord was restored to their hearts. He once again lived in their hearts, Luke 17:20-21.

CONCLUSION

All the way through this book, Ezekiel had to understand the consequences of Judah’s infidelity. In Ezekiel 10:4 he sees the ‘Shekinah’, the ‘Glory of YHVH’, which had demonstrated the presence of God with His people, throughout the wilderness Journey, and which, thereafter, rested between the Cherubim in the Most Holy Place in both Tabernacle and Temple, rise from its place and move to the entrance of the Temple, filling it with smoke. In Ezekiel 10:18-19, Ezekiel sees the ‘Glory of YHVH’ move again. This time it stands over the Cherubim, ‘the burning Ones’ who are always associated with the holiness of God, and in Ezekiel 10:19, the Cherubim, with the Glory of God over them ‘lift up their wings’, mount into the air, and fly to the door of the East Gate.

In **Ezekiel 10:23**, finally, the prophet sees the Glory of God, leaves both the Temple and the City and flies to rest on the mountain on the East side of Jerusalem, and the Spirit returns Ezekiel to the exiles in Babylon. 'Ichabod' which means 'the Glory has departed'!

But the final chapter brings everything to a grand climax. There is a new temple and a penitent and chastened people restored to their own land and city.

And the most wonderful message of all, **Ezekiel 48:35**, 'and from that day, the name of the City shall be, 'YHVH is there!' because the 'GLORY of YHVH' has returned!