

# Our Purpose

Relational Concepts has been organized to provide motivational instruction for men and women interested in being used by God.

We believe that Christian doctors, mechanics, housewives, realtors, lawyers, plumbers, secretaries, businessmen, businesswomen, students, etc. are the most effective spokesmen the church has.

These people are generally not in a position where they can take the time to go to a Bible college. Our purpose is to bring quality instruction to them, where they are, to be applied in their families, churches, businesses, and schools—the communities in which they live. We believe that *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



P. O. Box 88095  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49518  
relationalconcepts.org

This study book was compiled by David A. DeWitt—a graduate of Michigan State University (BS) and Dallas Theological Seminary (ThM, DMin). David is an Equipper and Discipler in the Relational Concepts' School of Discipleship. He is married to Ellen, has three married daughters, and nine grandchildren.

This material is intentionally **NOT** copyrighted. Please feel free to use any of it for any purpose at any time.

First Printing: January 2015

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.*

# **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. Chapters 1 – 24, Prophecy before the Destruction of Jerusalem .....</b>	<b>5</b>
A. Chapters 1 – 3, The Call and Preparation of Ezekiel.....	5
B. Chapters 4 – 24, Judgment Prophesied Against Judah .....	8
<b>II. Chapters 25 – 32, Judgment Prophesied Against the Nations .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>III. Chapters 33 – 48, Blessings Prophesied for an United Israel .....</b>	<b>38</b>
A. Chapters 33 – 39, Israel’s Future Spiritual Blessings .....	38
B. Chapters 40 – 48, Conditions Surrounding the Millennial Temple .....	49

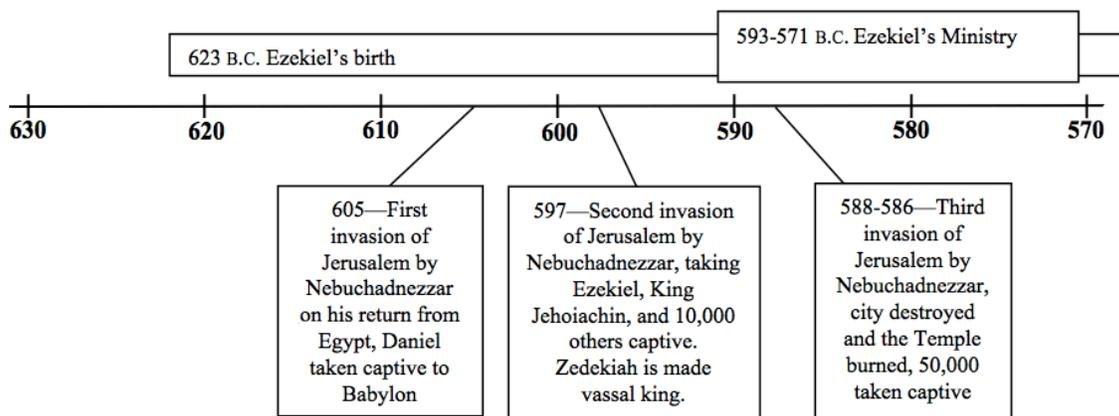
# Introduction

## The Prophet

We know nothing of Ezekiel except what we read in the book that bears his name. He is not mentioned in any other Old or New Testament book. His name means “God will strengthen” or (more likely, in view of 3:8-9) “God will harden.” He, Jeremiah, and Zechariah were all priests and prophets (1:3) and, as the son of Buzi the priest, Ezekiel was of the Zadok priestly family. If 1:1 also refers to his age as being 30, then he would be qualified to enter the priesthood (Numbers 4:3). There is no evidence, however, that he functioned as a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem before his deportation to Babylon.



He and his wife (or the girl who would become his wife) were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, along with 10,000 other Israelites, including King Jehoiachin (1:2; 33:21) in 597 B.C. Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry began during the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin’s exile (i.e., July 31, 593 B.C.). In Babylon, Ezekiel settled with the other captives on the Chebar River (1:3), which has now been identified as the royal canal of Nebuchadnezzar. It branched off from the Euphrates River just above Babylon and flowed east of the city. It continued through the site of ancient Nippur and then reentered the Euphrates.



If 1:1 refers to his age, he was born in 623 B.C. He was married and had his own home (8:1; 24:18), where the elders of Judah came to consult with him. His wife died during his ministry, but God forbade him to mourn for her (24:16-18). He prophesied for 22 years (593-571 B.C.), i.e., from age 30 to 52. Nothing is known of his death or the end of his ministry.

Nothing in the book indicates that the return to the Land had yet taken place. Nor is there any indication that Persia had yet overtaken the Babylonian Empire. That puts the time of the writing of this book in the early-to-mid Babylonian Captivity. Ezekiel speaks of the future fall of Babylon, which occurred in 539, which led to the edict of the Persian King Cyrus in 538, permitting the Judeans to return to their Land.

Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel were the three captivity prophets. Jeremiah (the older of the three) continued to minister in Jerusalem throughout the siege and then went to Egypt. Daniel (the younger of the three) was serving in the court of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:1-7), at the same time Ezekiel

was preaching to the Jews taken captive. Neither Jeremiah nor Ezekiel mentioned the other, but Ezekiel did mention Daniel three times (14:14, 20; 28:3). However, the book of Ezekiel is closer in concept and message to the book of Jeremiah than to the book of Daniel.

## **The Purpose**

Ezekiel wrote this book to record the revelations he received from God while living *by the river Chebar among the exiles* taken to Babylon from Jerusalem. **The purpose of those revelations was to tell the captives why they were there and what God was about to do.**

## **The Theme**

Subject: **The glory of God**

Complement: **requires the judgment of God**

The turning point in Ezekiel's life and ministry came when news arrived about the fall of Jerusalem (33:21), because it was God's confirmation of Ezekiel's predictions and the foundation of his later ministry. Ezekiel is the only major prophet with such a precise chronological arrangement. There is also a structural balance. Chapters 1–24 are about God's judgment on Judah; chapters 25–32, God's judgment on the nations; and chapters 33–48, the restoration of a united Israel.

Ezekiel used more symbols and allegories than any other Old Testament prophet. But these are meant to reveal, not conceal, the truth of God, and God Himself interpreted what the signs meant. The prophet also delivered his message by symbolic acts. At least ten are given (3:25, 26; 4:1-3, 4-6, 8, 13; 5:1-4; 12:3-7, 17-20; 21:11-12; 24:3-5, 15-24; 37:15-17). No prophet told so much about the manner of his inspiration as Ezekiel. God's ways were revealed to him in visions, and his visions were frequent. They are often compared with the visions of the Apostle John in the book of Revelation. Having received a vision of God's glory before he was commissioned, he continued to refer to God's glory throughout the book (1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23; 39:11, 21; 43:2-5; 44:4).

God's character determined His conduct throughout the book. Fifteen times God declared that He acted for the sake of His name, to keep it from being profaned (20:9, 14, 22, 39, 44; 36:20-23 [twice]; 39:7 [twice], 25; 43:7-8). Over 60 times, God said He had acted so that the people would *know that I am the Lord*.

## **The Outline of Ezekiel**

- I. Chapters 1–24, Prophecy before the Destruction of Jerusalem
  - A. Chapters 1–3, The Call and Preparation of Ezekiel
  - B. Chapters 4–24, Judgment Prophesied against Judah
- II. Chapters 25–32, Judgment Prophesied against the Nations
- III. Chapters 33–48, Blessings Prophesied for an United Israel
  - A. Chapters 33–39, Israel's Future Spiritual Blessings
  - B. Chapters 40–48, Conditions Surrounding the Millennial Temple

# I. Chapters 1–24 — Prophecy before the Destruction of Jerusalem

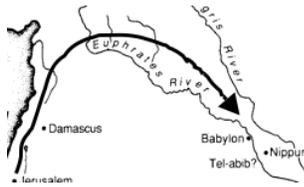
## A. Chapters 1–3, The Call and Preparation of Ezekiel

### Chapter 1 — The Vision

The account of God’s commissioning of Ezekiel is the longest commissioning recorded in the Bible (compare, for example, Isaiah 6 and Jeremiah 1). Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, before he was called to serve God, God prepared Ezekiel by giving him a vision of His own glory. This would continue to be Ezekiel’s motivation throughout the book.



**Verses 1-3 – The Historical Setting.** The *thirtieth year the fifth day of the*



*fourth month* would be July 31, 593 B.C. and is probably Ezekiel’s age. But Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon along with King Jehoiachin in March of 597. He settled with the exiles *by the river Chebar*, a canal off the Euphrates River east of the city of Babylon. Notice how Ezekiel received the message of God. This is the first time in the Bible that the phrase *The heavens were opened* describes a view into the heavenly realm (or dimension).

Later it was used in Matthew 3:16; Acts 7:56; and Revelation 19:11. *I saw visions of God*—described in detail in 1:4–2:7. Verses 2-3 may have been added by Ezra (Nehemiah 8:8).

**Verses 4-14 – The Four Living Beings.** *Within it there were figures resembling four living beings*—Chapter 10 identifies these as a kind of cherubim, and as far as we know, there were only four of these created. Each had four faces and four wings, *their legs were straight*—implying they were standing upright. *Their feet were like a calf’s hoof*—not like human feet. *They gleamed like burnished bronze*—like highly polished bronze or brass. They traveled *straight forward* and changed directions but *did not turn when they moved*. *Wherever the Spirit was about to do*—could refer to their own spirits or the Holy Spirit. *And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning*—seems like they were always moving, fast (like lightning), and were incredible in their power and brightness.

**Verses 15-21 – The Wheels.** The appearance of the wheels was *like sparkling beryl*—which has a transparent yellow-green glow. *One wheel was within another*—i.e., they move in different directions *without turning* and *the rims of all four of them were full of eyes*—possibly they could see through those eyes. *Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction*—the beings and their wheels together.

**Verses 22-18 – The Expanse.** Above the four living beings was an area *like the awesome gleam of crystal*. The Apostle John described the area around God’s throne as *a sea of glass, like crystal* (Revelation 4:6). As loud as the cherubim with their wings were, when God spoke *from the expanse that was over their heads*, His voice could be heard over their noise, and when He spoke, they lowered their wings and became quiet and stood still. Notice that it was often very loud around the throne of God. There was *something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance*—deep blue. *On that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man*. Although Ezekiel could describe the four living beings in detail, he could not describe God in detail. God has a form similar to a man, but the radiance around Him was so bright, that’s all Ezekiel could comprehend. *He dwells in unapproachable light* (1 Timothy 6:16). Ezekiel’s response was, *I fell on my face*—The response to being in God’s presence is bowing in worship.

## Chapter 2 — The Revelation, God Spoke to Ezekiel

**Verse 1-2 – The *Son of Man*.** This phrase refers to Ezekiel 93 times in the book. It emphasizes Ezekiel's humanity and seems to emphasize the huge separation between God and mankind. God told Ezekiel, *stand on your feet that I may speak with you!* But then Ezekiel said, *the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet.*

**Verses 3-6 – *I Am Sending You*.** This assignment was not Ezekiel's idea. It was a direct order from God to Ezekiel. *To the sons of Israel*—It was specifically the children of Judah and Benjamin, who were sons of Israel (Jacob). They were *a rebellious people*—"rebellious" occurs 8 times in chapters 2 and 3 and another 8 times in the rest of the book.

Ezekiel was not to fear them but to give them God's message, *whether they listen or not*—Ezekiel was not responsible for their response. He was responsible to give them God's Word. They were responsible for themselves and their own decisions. [Verses 7-10 belong with chapter 3.]

## Chapter 3 — The Scroll and the Watchman

**Verses 2:7–3:3 – Eating the Scroll. *Open Your Mouth and Eat what I am Giving You***—This scroll, written on the front and back, was *lamentations, mourning and woe* and did not reflect the last part of the book, which speaks of Israel's restoration (see Revelation 10:9-11). ***I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll.*** Ezekiel was to feed on the Word of God before he gave it to the people.

**Verses 4-11 – Ezekiel Was to Speak the Words of God to the *House of Israel*.** This phrase is used 101 times in the book. Notice Ezekiel was speaking to a small portion of Israel, yet his message was for the nation. Ezekiel did not need new language skills. He was not *being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language*. That is, they will understand what Ezekiel says. But God said, *the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me*. Therefore, God said, *I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads*—like Ezekiel's name (*yhezq-el*), which means "God will harden." *They are a rebellious house*—used 12 times to refer to Israel (2:5-6, 8; 3:9, 26-27; 12:3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3; 44:6).

**Verses 12-15 – The Vision Ended.** Ezekiel said he was transported *to the exiles who lived beside the river Chebar...embittered in the rage of my spirit*. Ezekiel's response to the whole vision and message from God was to feel the same strong emotions of anger toward Israel's sin that God did. And the effect was to cause *consternation among them*.

**Verses 16-21 – Ezekiel Appointed as a Watchman.** Several times "watchman" is metaphorically used of the prophets (Isaiah 56:10; Jeremiah 6:17; Hosea 9:8). The watchmen were stationed on a hilltop or on city walls or in watchtowers. Their job was to watch out for the enemies and warn the city's people of any approaching attack. If Ezekiel failed to warn of the approaching danger, God would hold Ezekiel accountable for their shed blood. But if Ezekiel did warn them, and they failed to heed the warning, their blood would be on their own heads.

**Verses 22-27 – God Instructed Ezekiel to Make His Way Out to the Plain.** Ezekiel said, *behold, the glory of the Lord was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar* (in 1:28). As before, Ezekiel's response was to fall on his face in worship of God. God then instructed him to: (1) shut himself up in his house, (2) have the people tie him up with ropes, and (3) God will make Ezekiel mute so the only time he can talk is when he has a message from God for the people.

## Applications from Chapters 1–3

1. **Ministry begins with being mindful of the glory of God.** Before God commissioned Ezekiel, He gave him an awesome glimpse into the heavenly realm (or dimension). The curtain was pulled back enough for Ezekiel to see into the heavenlies. This real experience of seeing the true glory of God was similar to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17. It is what gave Ezekiel the motivation, faith, and steadfastness to face the difficult ordeal that lay ahead.
2. **Ministry is often to people who are stubborn, obstinate, and rebellious.** Ezekiel’s ministry was not to a people who were uninformed, who never received a Word from God, but to a house that had the Word and were *stubborn, obstinate, and rebellious*. So, oftentimes, is our ministry to the church. They might be personally ignorant, but God has given them His Word in the Bible, which is readily available everywhere. They are not without information, they are *stubborn, obstinate, and rebellious*.
3. **Ministry requires us to be hardheaded, not flexible and tolerant.** God told Ezekiel, *Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads* (3:8). If we are going to survive the onslaught of divorce/remarriage, homosexuality, feminism, cohabitation, lying, cheating, and abortion, we will have to be hardheaded about the truth of God’s Word.
4. **Ministry is that of a watchman, not a psychologist.** Ezekiel’s job was not to fix their problems, make them psychologically healthy, provide them with a better lifestyle, or give them improved living conditions. Neither was he responsible for how they turned out or responded. His only job was to make sure he told them the Word of God. Such is our assignment in ministering to the people of God.

## Questions from Chapters 1–3

1. True or False? *The thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month* refers to Ezekiel’s age.
2. Ezekiel lived and prophesied in today’s
  - A. Iraq
  - B. Iran
  - C. Syria
3. When his ministry began, Ezekiel was
  - A. Married
  - B. Single
  - C. A widower
4. When Ezekiel’s ministry began, Jerusalem
  - A. Had already been invaded by Nebuchadnezzar
  - B. Had already been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar
  - C. Had, so far, been spared by Nebuchadnezzar
5. In the vision of chapter 1, directly above the four living creatures was
  - A. A rainbow
  - B. A throne
  - C. An expanse
6. True or False? God told Ezekiel that the Israelites might not listen to him because they are *stubborn, obstinate, and rebellious*.

Answers: 1. True. 2. A. 3. A. 4. A. 5. C. 6. False (*Israel will not be willing to listen to you—3:7*).

## B. Chapters 4–24 — Judgment Prophesied against Judah

### Chapter 4 — Predicting the Siege

In chapters 4–24, we read about Ezekiel’s commission by God to explain His judgment to the Judeans living in exile in Babylon.



**Verses 1-3 – The Sign of the Brick.** God instructed Ezekiel to carve a drawing of Jerusalem on a brick, apparently of soft clay. Then he was told to (literally) *act out* what would be the upcoming three-year siege against Jerusalem by the Babylonians (2 Kings 24:20–25:21; Jeremiah 52:4-11). He was to make a *siege wall* (or tower) and connect the tower to the walls with a ramp and put camps of soldiers around the model. Then he was to find *an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city*. Most likely, the plate represented an impregnable barrier between God and Jerusalem because of its sin (read Isaiah 59:2).

**Verses 4-8 – The Sign of Ezekiel Lying on His Sides.** Ezekiel was to lie on his left side for 390 days and then on his right side for 40 days. He was not to lie on his side 24 hours a day, since the next sign talks about him preparing and cooking food during that time. Each day represented a year that the people had sinned.

**Verses 9-17 – The Sign of the Unclean Food.** Ezekiel was to *take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt*—all common grains in Israel. But the interesting thing here is that he was to bake the bread *in their sight over human dung*. During the siege, they would eat all the animals, so human dung would be used for cooking. But, as a priest, Ezekiel wanted to keep himself undefiled (Leviticus 22:8; Ezekiel 44:31; Deuteronomy 23:12-14) and responded to God that he didn’t want to use the human dung. So God allowed him to use cow dung instead. Therefore, the sign lost some of its representative value.



### Chapter 5 — The Message of the Divided Hair

**Verses 1-17 – The Sign of the Unshaved Head and Divided Hair.** Ezekiel has represented the *fact* of the siege (first sign), the *length* of the siege (second sign), and the *severity* of the siege (third sign). Now he demonstrates the *results* of the siege (fourth sign). Ezekiel was to take a sword and cut off his hair. One-third of the hair was burned in a fire on the center of the brick, representing Jerusalem, meaning one-third of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would *die by plague or be consumed by famine* (Lamentations 2:20; 4:10). Ezekiel took the second third of hair and chopped it up with his sword around the brick. This meant one-third of the people of Jerusalem would die from the sword, that is, from the invasion of the Babylonians. The final third of hair, *you shall scatter to the wind*. These people would be taken captive to Babylon. Ezekiel was to take a few of the hairs and *bind them in the edges of your robes*. This probably meant that God will preserve a remnant in the midst of judgment.

Thirty-six percent of the uses of the word *abominations* are in Ezekiel, even though Ezekiel is only 6% of the Old Testament. It means “evil, atrocity, disgrace, horror, monstrosity, or obscenity.” God stated the reason for His judgment in 5:13, *Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them.*

## Chapter 6 — Idolatry on the *High Places*

**Verses 1-14 – The Message on Idolatry as God Addresses the Land.** *Set your face toward*—means to turn toward an object with hostile intentions. Ezekiel used the phrase 14 times (4:3, 7; 6:2; 13:17; 14:8; 15:7 [twice]; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2). *Mountains of Israel...* Living on the monotonous Babylonian plain, Ezekiel’s opening words must have brought nostalgic feelings of “home” to the exiles. *I will destroy your high places*—Typically, an altar placed on a mountain top would supposedly bring the worshipper closer to their god. The idols were in Canaan before the Israelites arrived, and God had told the Israelites to destroy the idols (Numbers 33:52). Instead, the Israelites apparently added an altar to God among the idols. Most kings who followed God tried to destroy the high places (Josiah in 2 Kings 23:8-9) and the evil kings rebuilt the high places (2 Kings 21:1-6). God said, *I Myself...will destroy your high places...your altars...your idols...your incense altars* and the people who worship at those places. *Then they will know that I am the Lord*—a phrase used 63 times in Ezekiel. Judgment brings about the knowledge of God. However, God would remember His covenant with Israel, and He *will leave a remnant*, although they will be scattered to other nations. Then that remnant (verse 9) *will remember...how I have been hurt [literally broken] by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me*. The result will be (verse 14) *I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah; thus they will know that I am the LORD*.

## Chapter 7 — The Nature of God’s Judgment

**Verses 1-27 – The Message on the Nature of Judgment.** Chapter 7 is a summary of all that is predicted in chapters 4–24. *The word of the LORD came to me saying*—these are words directly from God. The word *end* is used five times at the beginning of this sermon (7:2 [twice], 3, 6 [twice]). Amos 8:2 used the same word in describing the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. *Four corners of the land* indicates that no portion of the Land would escape God’s judgment.

- In verse 5 – *A disaster, unique disaster, behold it is coming!* The judgments of God throughout the Bible all seem to be unique—Adam out of the garden, the Flood, the confusing of languages, destruction of Sodom, a city falling down, the earth swallowing someone, etc.
- In verse 13 – When land was sold in Israel, it would revert to the original owner in the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10, 13-17). But the coming judgment would prevent it from happening.
- In verse 14 – *they have blown the trumpet and made everything ready*, but they can’t defend themselves against the Babylonian army.
- In verses 15-16 – There is no escape from God’s judgment.
- In verses 17-19 – Wearing sackcloth (usually made from goat hair, like burlap) and shaving hair indicated mourning. *Their gold will become an abhorrent thing* because it can’t deliver them. God can’t be “bought off.”
- In verses 20-22 – Many Israelites thought that God would surely protect His Temple. But they had profaned His Temple with their idols.
- In verses 23-24 – God said, *“I will bring the worst of the nations.”* Babylon was known for its cruelty to those they conquered.
- In verses 25-26 – When attacked, *they will seek peace, but there will be none*—it will be too late.
- In verse 27 – *The king will mourn*. The only Israelite Ezekiel called “king” was Jehoiachin, who was already in captivity in Babylon, mourning Jerusalem’s fall. *The prince will be clothed in horror* would be Zedekiah (12:10, 12; 21:25), appointed by the Babylonians, governing in Jerusalem. *According to their conduct I will deal with them*. This standard was mentioned five times in chapter 7 (vv. 3-4, 8-9, 27). God is being faithful to the Mosaic Covenant—if they disobey God and worship the idols, He will curse them.

## Chapter 8 — Idolatry in the Temple

Chapters 8–11 are a vision of the coming judgment on Jerusalem. This vision occurred *in the sixth year, on the fifth day of the sixth month*, i.e., September 17, 592 B.C. This was exactly 14 months since Ezekiel's first vision (1:1-2). Between these two visions, Ezekiel had a vision of God (chapters 1–3), had acted out four signs (chapters 4–5), and had been given two messages on judgment (chapters 6–7). Now God gave him a new vision.

**Verses 1-3 – A Theophany.** Ezekiel reports, *I was sitting in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me*, in Babylon. Ezekiel may have seen a vague image of God or an appearance of Jesus, the same as he saw in 1:27. He *caught me by a lock of my head* (his hair had obviously grown since 5:1). This was a vision. It did not physically happen. Ezekiel will be taken to Jerusalem in the vision, but his physical body remained sitting before the elders. The elders did not see what Ezekiel was seeing until he reported to them in 11:25, *The Spirit lifted me up...and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court...where the seat of the idol of jealousy*. This idol violated the second of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4). God was provoked to jealousy because an idol was receiving worship that should be God's alone (Deuteronomy 32:17, 21). Paul also said, *...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God* (1 Corinthians 10:20). Sacrificing to idols is sacrificing to demons.

**Verses 4-6 – Greater Abominations for Ezekiel to See.** Beside Ezekiel was *the glory of the God of Israel...like the appearance which I saw in the plain* (1:28). The purpose of this vision was for Ezekiel to see for himself *the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing*. And as bad as this was, God said, *yet you will see still greater abominations*.

**Verses 7-13 – Dig through the Wall.** God brought Ezekiel to the entrance of the court, probably the inner court. There was already a hole in the wall. But He told Ezekiel to dig *through the wall*. And when he *entered and looked, ...every form of creeping things and beasts and detestable things* [perhaps meaning unclean animals—Leviticus 11], *were carved on the wall all around* (see Deuteronomy 4:15-19). *Standing in front of them* [indicating worship] *were seventy elders of the house of Israel*. When Moses appointed assistants to help him in leading the people, the number God consecrated was 70 (Numbers 11:16-17). So this number must have continued. These are the official leadership of the people in Jerusalem.

*With Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them*. Shaphan had found the Book of the Law in King Josiah's time, which resulted in nationwide reform (2 Kings 22:3-13). So Ezekiel seems surprised to see Jaazaniah worshipping the idols because he came from a godly family.

**Verses 14-15 – Women Worshipping Tammuz.** *Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the LORD's house—we're moving toward the Temple, which you would expect would be in a direction toward God. But not so. Here we see the paganism is not hidden but overt. Women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz*. This is a Babylonian idol/god being worshipped on Judean soil!!!.

**Verse 16 – Men Worshipping the Sun.** *In the inner court...at the entrance to the Temple...between the porch and the altar—the area near the bronze altar, on which the sacrifices were offered, were about twenty-five men—they were called “elders” in 9:6. The front door of the Temple faced east, toward the rising of the sun (worship condemned in Deuteronomy 4:19).*

**Verses 17-18 – My Eye Will Have No Pity.** The abominations were not just in the Temple area but *they have filled the land*. So God said they *provoked Me repeatedly*. God’s lack of mercy is illustrated by the next phrase—*though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them*. This is repeated by several prophets: “*And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen,*” says the LORD of hosts (Zechariah 7:13; see also Jeremiah 11:11; Micah 3:4; Malachi 1:9).

## Applications from Chapters 4–8

- 1. Personal righteousness prevails over cultural disobedience.** It is fascinating that in 4:9-17 God allowed Ezekiel to change His command to cook food over human dung. This was, of course, repulsive, and the Law had cleanliness rules about that (Leviticus 22:8; Ezekiel 44:31; Deuteronomy 23:12-14). God wanted Ezekiel to depict exactly what would happen, yet He allowed him to substitute cow dung because of Ezekiel’s desire for personal righteousness, as defined by the Law. It’s never wrong to follow the written Word of God.
- 2. The judgment of God is visible today—in Israel.** When Israel entered the Land, it was flowing with milk and honey. But today it’s a land of desert wilderness. Why? Because, as a judgment, God said, “*throughout all their habitations I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah; thus they will know that I am the LORD*” (6:14).
- 3. Don’t mix Christianity and demonic religious practices – like tae kwon do, karate, and yoga.** What ended God’s patience with Israel was when they brought the idols of the religions of the world into His Temple. Today, we do this in our churches and with our Christian congregations. Beware!

## Questions from Chapters 4–8

- In 4:4-8, Ezekiel had to lay on his side. Each day he had to lay there
  - Represented a year that the people would be in exile.
  - Represented a year that the people had sinned.
  - We are not sure exactly what the days represented.
- When Ezekiel cut and divided his hair in chapter 5, that meant judgment on Israel. Which of the following was not part of that judgment?
  - One third would be exiled.
  - One third would die from famine.
  - One third would eat one another.
- God said He would destroy the high places on the mountains of Israel because of
  - Idolatry
  - Adultery
  - Infant sacrifice
- The judgments to come upon Israel described in chapter 7 are
  - Unique, something God never did before.
  - Common, something God always does when there is idolatry.
  - Specific, something tailor-made for their kind of abominations.
- Ezekiel’s vision in chapter 8 takes place in
  - Jerusalem
  - Babylon
  - A heavenly realm

Answers: 1. B. 2. C. 3. A. 4. A. 5. B.

## Chapter 9 – The Slaughter in Jerusalem

Chapters 8–11 are a vision of the coming judgment on Jerusalem. In 8:1-3, Ezekiel reported, *as I was sitting in my house with the elders of Judah...the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem.* Chapter 8 reveals the idolatry that caused the judgment. In chapter 9, the prediction of the judgment begins.

**Verses 1-4 – Those Who Grieve and Lament Are Spared.** Then God *cried out in my hearing with a loud voice, “Draw near, O executioners of the city.”* These were supernatural angelic destroyers. We’ve read about the angelic destroyers before at Sodom’s destruction (Genesis 19:1, 13); in Egypt on the night of the first Passover (Exodus 12:23); when 185,000 of the Assyrian army were killed (2 Kings 19:35); and they will destroy again during the Tribulation (Revelation 6–19).

*Among them was a certain man [another angelic being] clothed in linen [generally bleached, thus very white]. His clothing seems to separate him from the others (see Daniel 10:5; 12:6-7; Mark 16:5; Revelation 15:6). He had a writing case [typically wooden with hollowed places for black and red ink and a slot for reed pens].*

*Then the glory of the God of Israel [identified by a bright light] went up from the cherub [on the mercy seat of the Ark] on which it had been, to the threshold of the Temple [to the east and eventually to the Mount of Olives (11:23)].*

*He called to the man [the angel] clothed in linen... “Go through the midst of the city [Jerusalem]...and put a mark on the foreheads of the men [such as the prophet Jeremiah] who sigh and groan [grieve and lament] over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.”* This reminds us of the mark of the blood on the doorposts at the first Passover, Noah, Lot, Rahab, those who will be Raptured, and the 144,000 of Revelation 7.

**Verses 5-7 – Do Not Let Your Eye Have Pity.** *Do not spare—utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women—there was to be no distinction by age or sex.*

*But do not touch any man on whom is the mark—those faithful to God.*

**Verses 8-11 – Ezekiel Asked, “Are You Destroying the Whole Remnant of Israel?”** It reminds us of Abraham’s intercession for the righteous in Sodom (Genesis 18:22-32). But God says judgment must come because:

- (1) *The land is filled with blood*
- (2) *The city is full of perversion*
- (3) *They say, “The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!”*

The chapter ends with the angel clothed in linen saying, *“I have done just as You have commanded me.”*

## Chapter 10 — The Departure of the Glory of God

**Verses 1-3 – The Throne/Chariot of Chapter 1 Reappears.** It is standing on the right side of the Temple. If that means the Temple’s right side, it would be on the south side of the inner court. God told the angel clothed in linen, the one with the writing case, to *enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim*—evidently, the wheels extend below the cherubim, so there is space for the angel to enter. He was told to *fill your hands with coals from between the cherubim and scatter them over*

*the city.* Ezekiel had seen these coals before (1:13). Now God was going to use the fire to purge His “holy” city.

**Verses 4-7 – One of the Cherubim Placed Some Fire in the Hand of the Linen-Robed Angel.**

This was about the same time as *the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub*, thus leaving the Holy of Holies to come out to the Temple threshold on the east.

**Verses 8-22 – The Throne/Chariot Described in 1:15-21, But with a Few Added Details.** *Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around.* The only discrepancy is that one of the faces is called *the face of a cherub* instead of an ox. We don’t know why.

## Chapter 11 — The Judgment on Jerusalem’s Rulers

Chapters 8–11 are a vision of the coming judgment on Jerusalem. Chapter 8 reveals the idolatry that caused the judgment. In chapter 9, the judgment begins. Chapter 10 describes the departure of the glory of God. Chapter 11 ends the vision with judgment on the leaders.



**Verse 1-3 – Leaders Who Devise Iniquity and Give Evil Advice.** *The*

*Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the LORD’s house, toward the Kidron Valley and the Mt. of Olives [where Jesus was arrested, where He ascended into heaven, and where He will return (Acts 1:11; Zechariah 14:4)]. There were 25 men at the entrance of the gate—probably not the same 25 men worshipping the sun in 8:16 (who were evidently priests, whereas these 25 men were elders). Two specific leaders of the people are named: Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah—nothing else is known of them. They say, “This city is the pot and we are the flesh”—the city was like a secure iron pot, with the people, like meat, safely inside the pot.*

**Verses 4-13 – The Pot Will Not Save Them.** Even though their leaders were telling them they dwelt in peace and security, inwardly the people were afraid of the invasion. God said, “*You have feared a sword; so I will bring a sword upon you*” (verse 8). In verses 6-11, God turns the imagery around on them. The flesh, rather than being safe in the pot (within the walls of Jerusalem), is lying dead within the pot. Verse 12 is the result, “*Thus you will know that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor have you executed My ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations around you.*” But in verse 13, Pelatiah died, so Ezekiel asked, “*Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?*”

**Verses 14-21 – Two Answers for Ezekiel:**

- (1) It is those in exile, not those who currently dwell in Jerusalem, who are the remnant God is preserving and will bring back to the Land (verses 14-17).
- (2) Those who return to the Land will be accompanied by a spiritual return that will manifest itself in two ways:
  - a. *I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them.*
  - b. *That they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them* (see also Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 8:3-4).

**Verses 22-25 – God’s Glory Leaves Jerusalem.** Then *the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city.* God’s glory left Jerusalem, and passed over the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. This departure signaled Jerusalem’s

doom. The city would be devoid of God's blessing until the glory will return via the Mount of Olives (43:1-3). It is no coincidence that Christ ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12) and promised to return to the same place (Acts 1:11; cf. Zechariah 14:4).

*And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea. So the vision that I had seen left me. Then I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me. As the vision ended, Ezekiel was transported [once again by the Spirit (3:14; 8:3; 11:1; 37:1; 43:5)] back to the exiles in Babylon (where his body had been all along). When he came out of the vision, he told the exiles everything the LORD had shown him.*



## Chapter 12 — Signs of Judgment

Chapters 12–19 are about the futility of false optimism. So far, Ezekiel has used signs, two messages, and a vision to tell of the upcoming siege of Jerusalem. But the people were still not accepting the fact of Jerusalem's fall. So now, Ezekiel gave a new series of signs and messages. Any optimism was futile. Jerusalem's fate was sealed by God. Ezekiel now used the phrase *the word of the Lord came to me* in introducing 10 of 11 signs, sermons, and proverbs (12:1, 17, 21; 13:1; 14:2, 12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1). The final section in 19:1 seems to be a lament, which sums up the whole section. In each section, after the sign, God gave the interpretation.

### Verses 1-16 – The Sign of the Baggage and the Hole in the Wall.

In verse 2, God said the Israelites have *eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear*, [an idea often repeated by Jesus], *for they are a rebellious house*.

In verses 3-7, Ezekiel was to pack his belongings in a bag and bring it from one place to another as the exiles watched him.



In a second action, in the dark (or at twilight), he was to dig a hole through the wall and take his belongings out through the hole. He was to cover his face as a prophecy that King Zedekiah would attempt to leave that way but would be captured and blinded. The king would not see the Land he was leaving nor see Babylon where he was going. This was accurately fulfilled in 586 B.C. After a futile escape attempt, Zedekiah was taken to Nebuchadnezzar and forced to watch the enemy kill his sons. Then he was blinded and carried to Babylon where he spent the rest of his life in prison (see 2 Kings 25:1-7; Jeremiah 52:4-11).

In verses 14-16, we learn that God will *spare a few of them* but only so *that they may tell all their abominations among the nations...and may know that I am the LORD*.

**Verses 17-20 – The Sign of Trembling While Eating and Drinking.** The people in Jerusalem would experience terror as the Babylonians stripped their land. Yet it was *on account of the violence of all who live in it*. They were violent, so God brought violence on them.

Following Ezekiel's two signs, he delivered five messages on the certainty of judgment (12:21-25; 12:26-28; 13; 14:1-11; 14:12-23), to destroy the people's optimism. The first two are in chapter 12.

### **The First Message on the Certainty of Judgment**

**Verses 21-25** –The people had a proverb concerning Israel, saying, “*The days are long and every vision fails,*” i.e., that the visions of God’s prophets don’t happen, so ignore their warning. But God says, “*The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision.*” The prophecies would be fulfilled in their day.

Also, there were false prophets, who were contradicting God’s true prophets. They claimed there was no threat of invasion. God says, “*There will no longer be any false vision*” in Israel. “*I will speak the word and perform it,*” declares the Lord GOD.

### **The Second Message on the Certainty of Judgment**

**Verses 26-28** –The first message attacked the proverb that expressed the people’s doubts about the *fact* of God’s judgment. This message attacks the people’s doubts about the *immanency* of God’s judgment. They said, ...*he prophesies of times far off.* But God says, “*None of My words will be delayed any longer.*” God’s delay is a sign of mercy, not uncertainty.

## Applications from Chapters 9–12

1. **Sigh and groan over the sin going on in the church.** Ezekiel 9:4 is what I like to call a Rapture passage. *The LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.”* We see this with Lot in Sodom, Noah and the Flood, Rahab in Jericho, and, of course, those Raptured in 1 Thessalonians 4 and John 14. God does not punish the innocent with the guilty. And those spared from judgment are not just those who don’t participate in the idolatry but those who grieve and lament, or sigh and groan over it. Those who are like Lot when he was *oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men* (2 Peter 2:7).
2. **Compassion is not an attribute of God.** An attribute is the essential nature of someone. For example, God is always sovereign, just, and loving. Sovereignty, justice, and love are attributes of God. But in Ezekiel 9:10, God said, *“My eye will have **no pity** nor will I spare, but I will bring their conduct upon their heads.”* The word pity חַסָּד (*chus*) means *to pity* or *look upon with compassion*. So God does not do that all the time. There is a popular false doctrine (sometimes called Christian Universalism) that teaches, *“Since Jesus died for everyone, God forgives everyone, and so therefore should we, even when they do not repent”* (as with many homosexuals and feminists). That falsely assumes compassion is an attribute of God. Compassion is a characteristic of God, but it does not always apply to everyone in every situation. Justice, an attribute of God, does.
3. **Point out specific spiritual leaders by name who devise iniquity and give evil advice.** In Ezekiel 11:1-2 we read, *And behold, there were twenty-five men at the entrance of the gate, and among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. He said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and give evil advice in this city.”*

## Questions from Chapters 9–12

1. Ezekiel asked God, *Are You destroying the whole remnant of Israel?* (9:8). The answer is
  - A. Everyone in Jerusalem
  - B. Everyone except those who are exiled to Babylon
  - C. Everyone who is an unrepentant sinner.
2. True or False? The characters in Ezekiel’s vision of chapter 10 are the same as in chapter 1.
3. True or False? When the leaders of Jerusalem said, *This city is the pot and we are the flesh* (11:13), they meant the city wall, like an iron pot would protect them but eventually cook them.
4. In chapter 12, Ezekiel was told to dig a hole in the wall because
  - A. That’s how the people would try to escape
  - B. That’s how King Zedekiah would try to escape
  - C. That’s how those who groan for the nation will escape
5. The reason God’s judgment on Jerusalem was delayed is because
  - A. He was waiting for them to repent.
  - B. He was allowing their perversion to reach a point of no return.
  - C. He never tells Ezekiel why His judgment was delayed.

Answers: 1. C (see 9:4-5). 2. True (see 10:10, 22). 3. False. 4. B. 5. C.

## Chapter 13 — The False Prophets and False Prophetesses

### The Third Message on the Certainty of Judgment

**Verses 1-16** – God said the false prophets prophesy *from their own inspiration ... [and] their own spirit and have seen nothing*, even though they say, “Listen to the word of the LORD!”

In verses 4-9, they are described as *foxes among ruins*. Israel was in ruins, and the false prophets were the foxes who were at home living among the ruins of immorality.

In verses 10-16, the false prophets are pictured as those who put *whitewash on a wall*. The wall represented the false society set up by Israel, based on the tolerance of sin, primarily idolatry. The cracks, which revealed the certain destruction of that wall, were whitewashed over by the false prophets. False prophets make a bad wall look good, but that won't keep the wall from falling.

**Verses 17-23** – Women prophets ministered in both the Old and New Testaments (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4-5; 2 Kings 22:14; Acts 21:8-9). However, the prophetesses Ezekiel is talking about were like mediums or sorceresses. They were *women who sew magic bands on all wrists and make veils for the heads of persons...* Basically, these were “good luck charms” which supposedly had magical powers for healing or keeping away evil spirits. And they did this for a payment of *handfuls of barley and fragments of bread* (see also Deuteronomy 18:10).

## Chapter 14 — The Idolatrous Elders Have a Question

### The Fourth Message on the Certainty of Judgment

**Verses 1-11** – *Then some elders of Israel came to me and sat down before me*. Apparently, Ezekiel was still confined to his house (3:24). They probably came for some word from God about Jerusalem and their exile.

In verses 2-4, God said three things:

- (1) These elders *have set up their idols in their hearts*. [The idolatry in Jerusalem was openly displayed (chapter 8), but this idolatry was more subtle and more serious, it was in their hearts.]
- (2) They *have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity* [also mentioned in Ezekiel 7:19; 14:3-4, 7; 18:30; 33:12].
- (3) *Should I be consulted by them at all?* Instead of giving them the information they *wanted*, God tells Ezekiel to give them what they *needed*—God's attitude toward their idolatry. What they wanted was answered in terms of what God wanted.

### The Fifth Message on the Certainty of Judgment

**Verses 12-23** – If God would spare the wicked of Sodom for the sake of 10 righteous people (Genesis 18:22-33), the Israelites thought God would spare Jerusalem because of its righteous people. But this fifth message makes it clear that the righteous few (such as Jeremiah, who was living in Jerusalem at that time) would not prevent God's judgment on Jerusalem.

Verse 13 says, *if a country* [not “country” but *land*] *sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it I [will] destroy [it]*, as during the tribulation, when God pours His judgment out on the whole earth for her sin (Revelation 6:8).

*“Even though Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, as I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “they could not deliver either their son or their daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.”* [There is a similar illustration with Jeremiah’s words in Jeremiah 15:1 about the ineffectiveness of the praying of Moses and Samuel.] Just as with Sodom, only the righteous will be saved, and their righteousness cannot save the others.

Verses 22-23 say, *“Yet...survivors will be left in it who will be brought out...they are going to come forth to you and (1) you will see their conduct and actions and (2) you will know that I have not done in vain whatever I did to it,” declares the Lord GOD.*

**The next three chapters (15, 16, and 17) are three parables.**

## **Chapter 15 — The Parable of the Fruitless Vine**

In verses 1-5, God asked: *How is the wood of the vine better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees...? Another question: Can wood be taken from it [the vine] to make anything, or...a peg from it on which to hang any vessel?* The answer is: No. A vine is useless as wood. You can’t make anything from it, especially *if it has been put into the fire* and is charred.

In verses 6-8, God then applied the parable to Jerusalem. It was the vine branch. Its only use was to burn it with fire, and that is what God would do to Jerusalem. *“I set My face against them. Though they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them.”* Though some exiles had escaped Jerusalem, yet Babylon would continue to come against it until it was destroyed.

## **Chapter 16 — The Parable of the Adulterous Wife**

Chapter 16 is a long chapter that depicts Israel as an adulterous wife (as in Hosea 1–3; Jeremiah 2; and Isaiah 1:21; 50:1). The chapter outlines: After (1) mocking Israel as being of Canaanite origin – verses 1-3, the chapter is a depiction of (2) her sins – verses 4-34, (3) her punishment – verses 35-52, and (4) her restoration – verses 53-63.

**Verses 1-3 – Your Origin and Your Birth Are from the Land of the Canaanite.** The Israelites are descended from Noah’s son Shem (Genesis 10:21-31). The Canaanites were sons of Noah’s son Ham, not Shem (Genesis 10:6-20). And Ham’s son Canaan was cursed in Genesis 9:25. Before the land was called Israel, it was the land of Canaan because that’s where the descendants of Canaan had settled. When God said, *Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite*, He was telling them they were acting like they originated from these sinful people.

**Verses 4-34 – Israel Sinned like a Thankless Child who Becomes an Adulterous Wife.**

In verses 4-14, Jerusalem is described as a struggling abandoned infant who is cared for by the Lord until she becomes His bride.

In verses 15-34, Jerusalem is a wife who has become a harlot through idolatry (verses 15-25), by entering alliances with Egypt and Assyria and even paying them to bring their gods into Jerusalem (verses 23-34).

**Verses 35-52 – Israel’s Punishment Is Described and Explained.**

In verses 35-43, Israel’s punishment is described in verse 38 by continuing the adultery metaphor. *“Thus I will judge you like women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.”* In verses 44-52, Israel’s punishment is explained and justi-

fied, because her sin is worse than that of (what is called) her two sisters, *Sodom* and *Samaria* (vv. 44-52). Jerusalem had gone downhill from being a queen to being a tramp. Her beauty was gone. God had tried to stop her, but she refused to listen to His warnings. Now it was time for His judgment, and it would fit her crime. “*Thus I will judge you like women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged.*” The sentence for adultery was stoning (Leviticus 20:10). Jerusalem’s “adultery” was her idolatry, and the punishment for idolatry was the sword (Deuteronomy 13:12-15).

**Verses 53-63 – Israel’s Restoration Is Described.** The reason for the restoration of Jerusalem, Samaria, and Sodom is “*in order that you may bear your humiliation and feel ashamed for all that you have done*” (verse 54). God said, “*you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you*” (verses 59b-60a). This is the new *covenant* fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom (11:19-20; Jeremiah 31:31).

## Chapter 17 — The Parable of the Two Eagles

This third parable is about Zedekiah’s rebellion against the king of Babylon and the judgment that would result. Verses 1-10 are the parable, and verses 11-24 are God’s interpretation.

**Verses 3-6, 11-14 – The First Eagle Symbolizes Nebuchadnezzar.** Lebanon stood for Jerusalem. The eagle plucked and took away the top of the cedar (the Davidic line), meaning Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and took *its king [Jehoiachin] and princes and brought them to him in Babylon* (2 Kings 24:8-16, in 597 B.C.).

Nebuchadnezzar led Babylon in an attack against Egypt in 605 B.C. In extending his territories after that victory, he attacked Jerusalem in September of 605. At this time, he took Daniel and his companions as captives to Babylon. That’s the first Babylonian invasion.

Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem in 597 B.C. in response to King Jehoiachin’s rebellion. At this time, he took 10,000 captives to Babylon, among whom was King Jehoiachin and the Prophet Ezekiel. Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy Jerusalem at the second invasion. He set up Zedekiah as a vassal king. Zedekiah was *one of the royal family*.

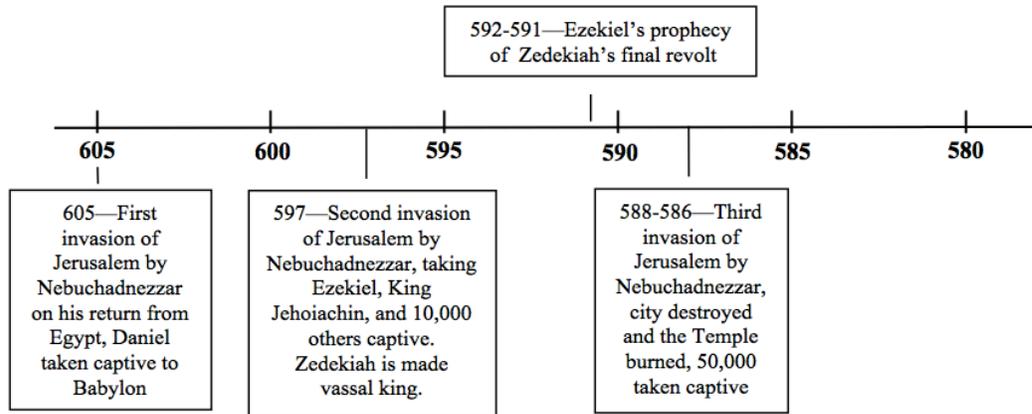
Nebuchadnezzar returned a third time in 588 B.C. After a long siege against Jerusalem, the city was destroyed and the Temple burned in the year 586. Most of the Jews who were not killed were deported to Babylon.

The restoration of the Jews back to their Land was made possible in 539 B.C. when Persia conquered Babylon. Having a policy to restore displaced people to their lands, King Cyrus issued a decree in 538 that permitted the Jews to return to Judah. About 50,000 Jewish exiles returned (with Ezra and Nehemiah) to rebuild the city walls and the Temple.

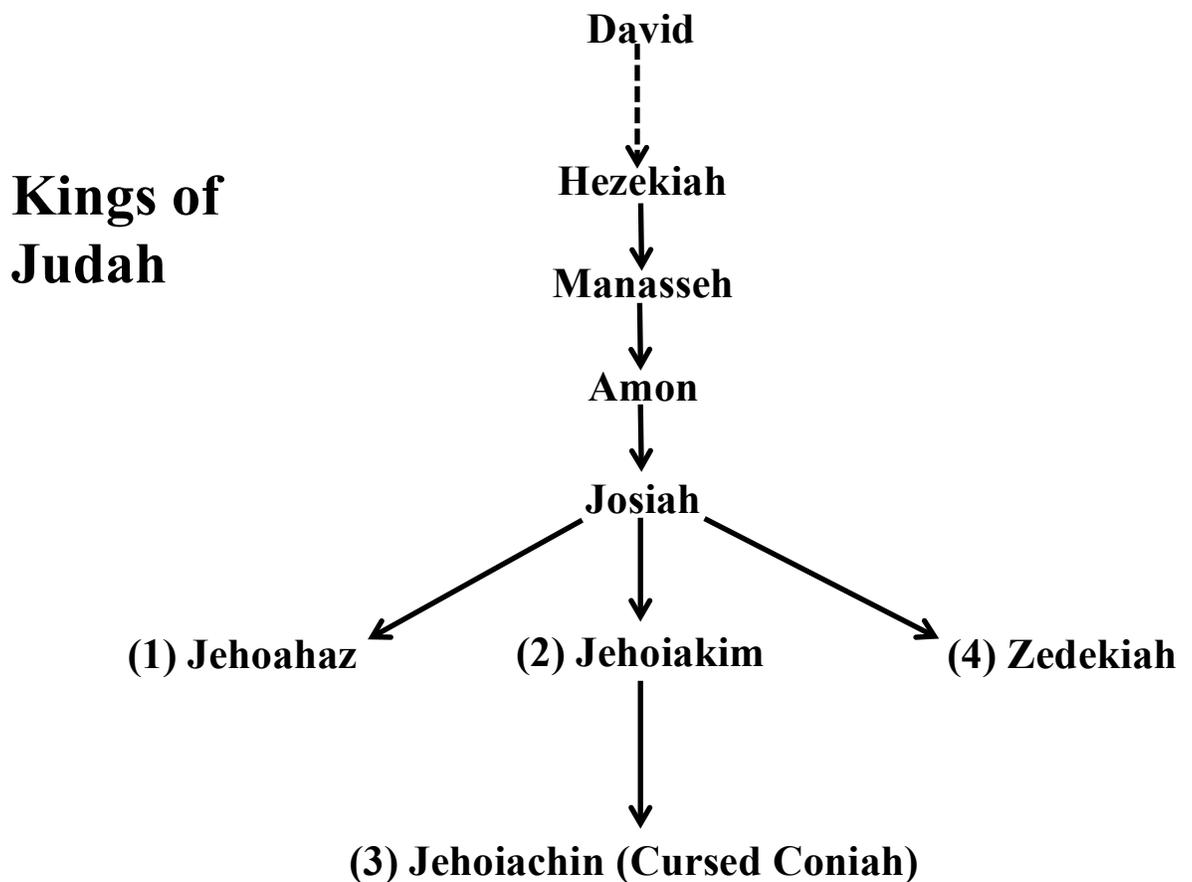
**Verses 7-8, 15 – Another Eagle Came, which Was Egypt.** Egypt influenced Zedekiah to rebel against Babylon. So Zedekiah broke his agreement with Babylon *by sending his envoys to Egypt that they might give him horses and many troops*. Assuming Ezekiel’s book is written chronologically, this prophetic parable was written sometime between 592 B.C. (8:1) and 591 B.C. (20:1). Zedekiah’s final revolt against Babylon began in 588 B.C., so Ezekiel predicted Zedekiah’s revolt about three years before it happened.

**Verses 9-10, 16-21 – Because Zedekiah Breaks His Oath to Babylon,**

therefore, Nebuchadnezzar will come against him and carry him to Babylon where he will die. In breaking his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, he was also breaking an oath to God because God had given Jerusalem into the hands of the Babylonians (Jeremiah 27).



**Verses 22-24 – The Messiah Will Bring Restoration.** God will *take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar*. God will replant a king from the line of David *on the high mountain of Israel*. That plant will *bear fruit and become a stately cedar*. Instead of plucking branches from it (verse 4), *birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches*. Israel will protect the surrounding nations rather than being subject to them. Then *all the trees will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree*. It is God who *removes kings and establishes kings* (Daniel 2:21). This prophecy was not fulfilled when the Jews returned to the Land. It is still waiting to be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom under the Messiah, Jesus Christ. At that time, God's kingdom will rule the world (Daniel 2:44-45; Zechariah 14:3-9, 16-17).



## Applications from Chapters 13–17

1. **Beware of false prophets and false teachers.** They are everywhere and in every age, both in Israel and in the church. Light attracts bugs. There is no way to eliminate false prophets and false teachers, but they can be detected and exposed. The point of Ezekiel 13 is that they will always depart from a plain understanding of the Word of God by whitewashing sin. For example, they will find some nice (whitewashed) way to present homosexuality, cohabitation, feminism, divorce/remarriage or lying. Expect them to whitewash those cracked walls by appealing to undefined nice sounding words like love, grace or forgiveness, but without the repentance that actually repairs the cracked walls. So how do you know if your minister or leader is a false teacher? One question would be— “Is he or she whitewashing sin?”
2. **Don’t think you can live in sin and expect God to answer your prayer.** Chapter 14 tells us that when leaders live in unrepentant sin and think they can call upon God, they are mistaken. They do not need to know the answer to whatever it is they are asking God to do, they need to know what God is asking them to do.
3. **Usefulness is only what benefits God’s plan.** Chapter 15 tells us about a vine which is useful for nothing but to be burned up. That’s the condition of people living for themselves.
4. **We should never ignore the gifts of God.** Ezekiel 15 and 16 tell about God’s favor and care for Israel, which was ignored and exchanged for idolatry. God has also chosen us in His grace, which we exchange for idolatry when we put something else first.

## Questions from Chapters 13–17

1. In Ezekiel 13, the false prophets are pictured as
  - A. Ruins and cracks in a wall
  - B. Foxes and whitewash on cracked walls
  - C. Foxes and those who whitewash walls
2. The elders in Ezekiel 14 were rejected by God because of their
  - A. Idolatry
  - B. Immorality
  - C. Attitude
3. In Ezekiel 15, God said the vine would be fuel for fire. The fire represents
  - A. The Babylonian captivity of the Israelites
  - B. The destruction of Jerusalem
  - C. Ezekiel’s prophecy
4. In Ezekiel 16, God described Israel as an adulterous wife whom He would judge because of His
  - A. Jealousy
  - B. Wrath
  - C. Love
5. In Ezekiel 17, the two eagles referred to are
  - A. Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh
  - B. Babylon and Egypt
  - C. Nebuchadnezzar in particular and Egypt in general

Answers: 1. C. 2. C (*idols in his heart*–14:4-7). 3. B. 4. A (verse 38). 5. A or C.

## Chapter 18 — The Message of Individual Responsibility

**Verses 1-4 – God Asked Ezekiel about a Proverb Being Spoken in Israel.**

*The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge.* This must have been a well-known parable because Jeremiah also quoted it (31:29-30). The point was that the people thought they were suffering not because of *their* sins but because of their *parents'* sins. The implication is that God is unjustly punishing them (Ezekiel 18:25).



It is true that God said, “*I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me*” (Exodus 20:5; 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 5:9). The Exodus and Deuteronomy passages may mean:

- (1) The *effects* of the sins of our parents are long-lasting, or
- (2) That *visiting* is a tendency to commit our parents' sin

But Ezekiel 18 teaches that each person is only judged for their own sin.

**Verses 5-20 – Ezekiel Gives Three Hypothetical Cases:**

- (1) The righteous man who will live
- (2) His unrighteous son who will die
- (3) His righteous grandson who will live

The righteous man is described with 15 assets. He is one who:

- [1] *practices justice and*
- [2] *righteousness, and*
- [3] *does not eat at the mountain shrines or*
- [4] *lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or*
- [5] *defile his neighbor's wife or*
- [6] *approach a woman during her menstrual period, if a man*
- [7] *does not oppress anyone, but*
- [8] *restores to the debtor his pledge,*
- [9] *does not commit robbery, but*
- [10] *gives his bread to the hungry and*
- [11] *covers the naked with clothing, if he*
- [12] *does not lend money on interest or take increase,*
- [13] *if he keeps his hand from iniquity and*
- [14] *executes true justice between man and man, if he*
- [15] *walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully* (verses 5b-9a)

The man's son does not do those things, but his the grandson does.

**Verses 21-24 – The Law of Repentance and Reversion.** *If the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live he shall not die. All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; ...But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness... All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered ... he will die.*

**Verse 25-32 – But the House of Israel Says, ‘The Way of the Lord Is Not Right’** (verses 25, 29). The basic moral issue is agreeing or disagreeing with God about what is right.

The Israelites were charging God with injustice. “*Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’*” But God replied, “*Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not*

*right?*” This often happens. People refuse to admit their sin (i.e., what is sin in God’s eyes) and instead charge God with injustice OR they say something like, “My God isn’t like that,” “My God is a God of love, not judgment,” “My God wants me to be happy,” “God would not want me to live like this,” or “God changes with a changing society.” The thing is, God is God, so He gets to decide what’s right and wrong. And because God is good (all the time), His ways are good (all the time).

In verses 30-32, God, through Ezekiel, concluded: “*Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,*” declares the Lord GOD. When Jerusalem falls, it will be because of the wicked, idolatrous conduct of the individual Jews living there at that moment. The only way to escape that physical death (by famine and sword) was to *Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you...and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!* The reason for the appeal for repentance is, “*I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,*” declares the Lord GOD. “*Therefore, repent and live.*”

In verse 32, we get a glimpse at the heart of God. Here, He is talking of the physical/temporal consequences to Israel. But the same is true spiritually and eternally. Until the last moment of a person’s life, God begs them to repent and live eternally. He takes no pleasure in their eternal death.

## **Chapter 19 — A Lament for Kings Jehoahaz and Zedekiah**

Chapter 19 emphasizes the futility of false optimism (chapters 12–19) with a lament for Israel and her last leaders. This is the first of five laments in Ezekiel (26:17-18; 27; 28:12-19; 32:1-16). Three of the other laments were for Tyre, and one (32:1-16) was for Egypt. A “lament” was a funeral song for the dead person. It usually stressed the good qualities of that person and the tragedy or loss that resulted because of their death (see 2 Samuel 1:17-27).

**Verses 1-9 – A Lament over King Jehoahaz.** The *lions* are the *princes of Israel*, i.e., the kings. The *mother* is Israel. King Jehoahaz, after a reign of only 3 months, was taken to Egypt, where he died (2 Kings 23:31-34).

The next king, Jehoiakim, died in Jerusalem and is not mentioned in this lament.

The next king, Jehoiachin, reigned for only 3 months, and it was a time of terror and destruction. He was stopped when he was taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon where he remained in prison 37 years and was released for a time by Nebuchadnezzar’s son (who succeeded him on the throne), but Jehoiachin died in Babylon, *his voice ... heard no more [in] Israel*.

**Verses 10-14 – A Lament over King Zedekiah.** The rest of the lament is about the last King Zedekiah, a vassal king appointed to Israel’s throne by Nebuchadnezzar. Israel is the vine. *It was fruitful* because of the blessing of God on it. *It had strong branches fit for scepters of rulers*, i.e., it had many strong kings. But now *it was cast down to the ground*. Israel went from blessing to disaster. *There is not in it a strong branch, a scepter to rule*—The nation that had strong rulers in the past (verse 11) now would have no king on the Davidic throne after Zedekiah was taken to Babylon.

When Christ returns, then there will once more be a king in the line of David on the throne of Israel.

**Chapters 20–24 are the history of Judah’s corruption.**

## **Chapter 20 — Past Rebellion and Future Restoration**

**Verses 1-32 – A Review of the History of Israel’s Rebellion and God’s Restoration.**

In verses 1-4, the elders sit before Ezekiel to inquire of the Lord, *in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth of the month*. This is August 14, 591 B.C., almost 11 months after the last day given in 8:1.

But God tells them about their rebellion:

- Verses 5-9 are their rebellion in Egypt
- Verses 10-17 are their rebellion between Egypt and Kedesh-barnea
- Verses 18-26 are their rebellion in the wilderness
- Verses 27-29 are their rebellion in Canaan
- Verses 30-32 are their rebellion of their present generation

The statement in verse 26, *I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live*, probably refers to the statutes and ordinances of the foreign nations and their gods. God gave these as a judgment for their idolatry. God wants to be compassionate, but His justice will not allow it.

**Verses 33-44 – The Judgment of the Jews Living after the End of the Tribulation, when Christ Returns.** The Chief Shepherd (Christ) will make His flock *pass under the rod* (verse 37), *purge...the rebels* (v. 38), separating the sheep from the goats, and bring the faithful into His kingdom (36:14-38; 37:21-23; Matthew 25:31-34; John 3:3), and the rebels will be judged for their sin and banished to everlasting punishment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

**Verses 45-49 – The Parable of the Forest Fire.** This is a prophecy against *the forests of the Negev*. Ezekiel was to face toward the southern part of Judah. The parable was that the Land would be destroyed by fire, i.e., the fire of judgment. But the people refused to understand the parable, so Ezekiel gave four messages that expand on the meaning. In these messages, Ezekiel changed the “fire” to “sword” and the “Negev” to Judah and Jerusalem.

In the Hebrew Bible, this section is actually the first part of chapter 21. It introduces the four messages of chapter 21.

## **Chapter 21 — Four Messages of the Sword**

The poetic language and metaphorical expressions make this a difficult chapter to understand.

**Verses 1-7 – The Sword Drawn.** The object of God’s judgment was *Jerusalem... the sanctuaries* [the Temple and possibly other idol temples], and *the land of Israel*. The judgment will affect both *the righteous and the wicked*. For example, Jeremiah suffered famine in the city, Daniel and Ezekiel suffered being taken into captivity. Although God’s judgment was on the wicked, and the righteous are not punished for the sins of the wicked, nearly all sin causes collateral damage. Sin is almost never private. Usually, everyone close to the sinner also suffers.



**Verses 8-17 – The Sword Sharpened.** God’s sword is *sharpened and also polished*—it is ready to bring judgment. God tells Ezekiel to *Cry out and wail, son of man; for it [the sword] is against My people, it is against all the officials of Israel* (verse 12). God’s sword will *go to the right...go to the left, wherever your edge is appointed*. It will pursue the people until the judgment is complete. The last sentence of verse 10 is unclear, *Or shall we rejoice, the rod [or scepter] of My son despising every tree?* The scepter may refer to Judah (Genesis 49:9-10) or its kings. The idea may be, “Should we rejoice as if there was no coming judgment?”

### **Verses 18-27 – The Sword Directed toward Jerusalem**

In verses 18-20, Nebuchadnezzar was the sword God brought against Israel. Historically, we know that in 588 B.C. three cities or countries were rebelling against Babylon: Israel (specifically, Jerusalem), Tyre, and Ammon. Nebuchadnezzar left Babylon and arrived at Riblah (north of Damascus in Syria). He had to decide which to attack first: due west to Tyre was too difficult, so he could go south down the coastal highway to Judah and Jerusalem or go down the Transjordanian highway (east of the Jordan River) and attack Ammon and Rabbah (the capital of Ammon, today, the modern city of Amman in Jordan).

In verses 21-23, Nebuchadnezzar and his military advisors had difficulty deciding, so they used three means to determine what they should do. They used:

- 1) *He shakes the arrows* [something like drawing straws today]
- 2) *Consults the household idols* [probably through idolatrous prophets]
- 3) *He looks at the liver* [a form of divination known as hepatoscopy, where the shape and markings of the liver of a sacrificed animal were studied by soothsayers to give advice]

Verse 22, *Into his right hand came the divination, ‘Jerusalem.’* God caused all the signs to point to Nebuchadnezzar’s right hand (looking south from Riblah, the coastal road would be on his right). So he laid siege to Jerusalem. But to the people of Jerusalem, *it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes* (verse 23), because they don’t believe he will succeed. Here God used false, demonic, and idolatrous practices to bring about His judgment.

Verses 24-27 are about the removal of the last king, Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:4-7), here called the *wicked one, the prince of Israel*. But the most interesting statement is verse 27, *A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it*—stressing that Israel’s throne will be absolutely deserted. *This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him*. This is a prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ, the true righteous One, who will one day be on the throne of Israel (Revelation 19:11-16; 20:4).

**Verses 28-32 – The Sword Directed toward Ammon.** The Ammonites thought they had escaped Nebuchadnezzar’s attack, but he conquered them, too, just a few years later. Though enemies, Ammon had joined Jerusalem in rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. After Jerusalem’s fall, the Ammonites organized a coup that caused the death of Gedaliah, the governor of the Land, appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 40:13–41:10). Then the Ammonites tried to set up another government in Israel to oppose Babylon (probably so Nebuchadnezzar would once again attack Jerusalem instead of Ammon). But God said the Ammonites would not escape.

## Applications from Chapters 18–21

1. **It matters a great deal how we finish our lives.** Ezekiel 18:21-24 tells us that, concerning a wicked man who repents, *All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; ...But [it also tells us] when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness... All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered.*
2. **Repentance is a change of mind, which always results in a change of life** (18:30, 32). If we continue in our sins, we have not repented of them. A repentant person *turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness* (18:21).
3. **Whether God judges (as in the upcoming tribulation and Second Coming) or restrains judgment (as He is doing today), it is always done for the sake of His holy name.** Six times in Ezekiel (three of them in chapter 20), God tells us that He judged Israel, or restrained His judgment, based upon His own name (20:9, 14, 22; 36:21, 22; 39:7). For example, consider 20:14, *But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, before whose sight I had brought them out. God's name...in the sight of the nations,* seems to refer to the evidence He has given the nations for His own character. The exodus of Israel, and their preservation in the wilderness in spite of their sin, was tangible, real, rational, discernable evidence about the character of God, now available to all the nations, not just to Israel.

## Questions from Chapters 18–21

1. According to Ezekiel 18, a person today who has done good deeds (like, say, helping the poor, being honest in his relationships, and giving sacrificially) all his life but becomes evil at the end of his life, those previous good deeds
  - A. Mean something
  - B. Mean nothing
  - C. Mean he is saved but not rewarded for those good deeds in heaven.
2. Ezekiel 18 tells us that what's important is
  - A. The end of your life
  - B. The decision point in your life
  - C. The sum total of all your life
3. Of the four last kings of Judah, three are referred to in Ezekiel 19. Two of those are
  - A. Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim
  - B. Jehoiakim and Zedekiah
  - C. Jehoahaz and Zedekiah
4. In Ezekiel 20:33, God said, *"surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you."* He is referring to
  - A. The time of the Babylonian Captivity
  - B. The time of the return from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah
  - C. The time of the future Millennial Kingdom
5. The sword of Ezekiel 21 is
  - A. Nebuchadnezzar
  - B. The wrath of God
  - C. Ezekiel's prophecy

Answers: 1. B. 2. A. 3. C. 4. C. 5. A.

# Chapter 22 — The Defilement and Judgment of Jerusalem

## The First Message — The Reason for Judgment

**Verses 1-16** – In verse 2, God asked Ezekiel an interesting question. “*And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city?*” He is asking Ezekiel to be judgmental. Ezekiel could not carry out judgment, only God could do that. But there is a sense in which Ezekiel could also judge the city—to *cause her to know all her abominations*.

Verses 3-12 list the sins of the Jews living in Jerusalem. Specifically, in verses 7-12:

### Social Sins

- *treated father and mother lightly* [disrespectfully]...
- *the alien* [or stranger] *they have oppressed*...
- *the fatherless and widow they have wronged*...

### Worship Sins

- *despised My holy things*...
- *profaned My Sabbaths* [Saturdays and Festival days]...
- *shedding blood*...
- *eaten at the mountain shrines* [participate in idolatry]...

### Sexual Sins

- *committed acts of lewdness* [being crude and offensive sexually]...
- *uncovered fathers' nakedness* [probably having sex with their father's younger wives]...
- *humbled* [better, *humiliate* or *oppress*] *her who was unclean in her menstrual impurity*...
- *committed abomination* [same word for homosexual abomination, here it's adultery] *with his neighbor's wife*...
- *lewdly* [same as above] *defiled his daughter-in-law*...
- *had humbled* [same as above] *his sister, his father's daughter*...

### Financial Sins

- *taken bribes to shed blood*...
- *taken interest and profits*...
- *have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression*...

And to sum it all up: “*you have forgotten Me,*” declares the Lord GOD.

Verses 13-16 tell us that they won't be able to dismiss God's judgment the way they dismissed His commandments. God *will scatter you among the nations*...and Israel will *profane yourself in the sight of the nations*. Then “*you will know that I am the LORD.*”

## The Second Message — The Means of Judgment

**Verses 17-22** – Here God uses the illustration of *dross*. Dross was the scum left and poured off when the pure metals were melted in the furnace. Dross is useless. God said, “*Israel has become dross to Me.*”

Verses 20-22 are a general picture of the judgment of God. The example is similar to that of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, *each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work* (verse 13).

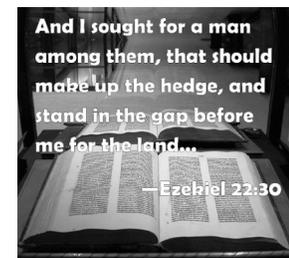
## The Third Message — The Recipients of Judgment

Verses 23-31 – In verses 23-29, God pours out His wrath on:

- **Her prophets:** ...like a roaring lion tearing the prey...devoured lives...made many widows
- **Her priests:** violence to My law...profaned My holy things...made no distinction between the holy and the profane...hide their eyes from My Sabbaths [basically, not honoring the holiness of God]
- **Her princes:** like wolves tearing the prey...shedding blood...destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain [governments kill more people than all other causes of death put together]
- **Her prophets:** seeing false visions...divining lies for them...saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken [like saying, "God told me..."]
- **The people:** practiced oppression [using cruel and unjust power, like bullying] ...committed robbery...wronged the poor and needy...oppressed [same word as above] the sojourner without justice

In verses 30-31, God searched for a man among them who would build up the wall [protect Jerusalem from the wrath of God] and stand in the gap [the gap between God's holiness and their sin, which also introduces the idea of a possible substitutionary atonement] before Me for the land, so I would not destroy it; but I found no one. This did not mean there was no godly person in Jerusalem because Jeremiah was there, and he had the moral qualities God required. But he could not build the wall of protection nor stand in the gap between God and man because

- (1) He was not in a place of authority.
- (2) The people were too far gone in their sin to listen.
- (3) He was not capable of being a substitute (*stand in the gap*) between God and the Jerusalem Jews.



## Chapter 23 — The Parable of the Two Adulterous Sisters

God presents Ezekiel with an allegory illustrating Judah's unfaithfulness to God. It is similar to chapter 16, but in chapter 16 Ezekiel focused on Judah's idolatry, whereas in chapter 23 he adds Judah's forbidden foreign alliances in addition to, or as a cause of, her idolatry. [Remember: whereas the church is to be in the world but not of the world, Israel was to be neither in the world nor of the world.]

In the allegory, the first sister Oholah represents Samaria or the Northern Kingdom, and the second sister Oholibah represents Jerusalem, or the Southern Kingdom.

The chapter breaks down as follows:

- Verses 1-10 describe the unfaithfulness and therefore the punishment of *Oholah* (Samaria).
- Verses 11-21 describe the unfaithfulness of her sister *Oholibah* (Jerusalem).
- Verses 22-35 describe the punishment of the two sisters.
- Verses 36-49 are a conclusion.

**The names of the sisters** are significant. *Oholah the elder*—in Hebrew, it means “her tent.” *Oholibah her sister*—means “my tent is in her.” The word “tent” was often used of God's sanctuary in Israel (Exodus 29:4, 10-11, 30). It's possible the reference here is that the sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom was of her own making, whereas God's sanctuary was in the midst of Jerusalem.

**In very graphic language,** Ezekiel portrays the utter spiritual shame to which Judah had fallen. *...she lusted after her lovers, after the Assyrians, her neighbors, who were clothed in purple, governors and officials, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses* (verses 5-6). It seems that, as well as all her other sins, God objects to their pursuing luxurious living (see Luke 16:19-21).

**The conclusion** (verses 36-49) begins with this question, essentially the same question God asked in Ezekiel 22:2. Here He asks, *Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah?* Once again, God is calling Ezekiel to be judgmental. And once again, his job was *Then declare to them their abominations.*

## **Chapter 24 — The Boiling Pot and Ezekiel's Wife Dies**

Chapter 24 concludes the judgments on Judah (chapters 4–11; 12–19; 20–24). It is in two parts:

**Verses 1-14 – The Parable of the Boiling Pot.** The date is January 15, 588 B.C. God said, *The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day* (also mentioned in 2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 39:1; 52:4). In verses 3-13, God tells Ezekiel a parable about putting a pot, with *water in it*, and putting in it choice pieces of meat and bones and to *make it boil vigorously*. The pot is the place of their destruction. Jerusalem is like a *pot in which there is rust*. As the food cooks, the rust comes loose and floats to the top. Yuck! So throw out the meal, *take out of it piece after piece* [the people dragged out of Jerusalem]. Those in Jerusalem had shed blood and *placed it on the bare rock*, i.e., they didn't even try to hide it. So God would openly *put her blood on the bare rock*.

**Verses 15-27 – The Death of Ezekiel's Wife.** Possibly in a dream at night (verse 18), God explained to Ezekiel that *I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow*. But God's instruction to Ezekiel was: *you shall not mourn and you shall not weep...groan silently; make no mourning for the dead.*



Verse 18 says, *So I spoke to the people in the morning* [after the revelation during the night about his wife's death], *and in the evening my wife died. And in the morning* [the following morning, when she would have been buried and there would be a time of mourning] *I did as I was commanded* [i.e., he did not mourn openly]. His wife's death is explained in verses 20-24, when God said, *"I am about to profane My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes and the delight of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind will fall by the sword... You will not mourn and you will not weep, but you will rot away in your iniquities and you will groan to one another."*

## Applications from Chapters 22–24

1. **We are not to execute judgment, but we are to be judgmental.** Three times in the book God asked Ezekiel *will you judge* (20:4; 22:2; 23:36). God is calling Ezekiel to be what we would call judgmental. Ezekiel could not execute judgment, only God could do that. But Ezekiel, like all of us, can be judgmental in the sense of to *cause her to know all her abominations*. Likewise, we should judge in the sense of causing believers close to us to know their abominations.
2. **God is looking for people who will *build up the wall and stand in the gap*** (22:20). Today, these would be the people that *build up the wall and stand in the gap* between God’s holiness and the sins of the church by teaching them the Word of God, pointing out how they violate the Word of God and exhorting them to turn from their sin.
3. **God is grieved by our sin, and we should feel the same grief about it that He does.** The death of Ezekiel’s wife is an amazing revelation about God. He is willing to take the life of the prophet’s wife, just to make a point. God’s only explanation is, “*I am about to profane My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes and the delight of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind will fall by the sword... You will not mourn and you will not weep, but you will rot away in your iniquities and you will groan to one another.*” Apparently, God wanted Ezekiel to feel what the Israelites will feel, which is how God feels about their sin.

## Questions from Chapters 22–24

1. In Ezekiel 22:3-12, there is a list of the sins committed in Jerusalem. Which one of these is not listed as one of those sins?
  - A. Idolatry
  - B. Homosexuality
  - C. Adultery
2. In Ezekiel 22:23-31, God condemned the priests, the prophets, the princes, and the people. The people are condemned because they were
  - A. Seeing false visions
  - B. Idolaters
  - C. Bullies
3. In chapter 23, it says *Oholibah...lusted after her lovers*. This means
  - A. Israel looked for help from Egypt.
  - B. Judah looked for help from Assyria.
  - C. Judah looked for help from Babylon.

Answers: 1. B. 2. C. 3. B.

## II. Chapters 25–32 — Judgment Prophesied Against the Nations

### Chapter 25 — God’s Judgment on Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia

God’s judgment began with Judah (chapters 4–24), but now it would extend to the nations surrounding her (chapters 25–32), who contributed to Judah’s downfall. God’s judgment of them is based on the Abrahamic Covenant: *“I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse”* (Genesis 12:1-3; 15).

**Verses 1-7 – Judgment on Ammon.** The Ammonites are the descendants from incest between Lot and his younger daughter (Genesis 19:31-38). Judah and the Ammonites had been in conflict since the time of the Judges (Judges 10:6–11:13). Saul fought them, and David conquered them (1 Chronicles 19:1–20:3). After the death of Solomon, they regained their independence. Ammon initially sided with Nebuchadnezzar in an attempt to gain more territory (2 Kings 24:1-2) in 600-597 B.C. But in 588, it joined Judah and Tyre against Babylon. When Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah, instead of coming to Judah’s aid, it rejoiced over Judah’s misfortune, hoping to gain some more territory. God said that *“Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the scorn of your soul against the land of Israel....therefore, I have stretched out My hand against you and I will give you for spoil to the nations.”*

**Verses 8-11 – Judgment on Moab.** The Moabites are the descendants from incest between Lot and his older daughter (Genesis 19:31-38). The conflict between Israel and Moab began when Balak, the king of Moab, hired Balaam to prophesy against Israel. King Eglon oppressed Israel during the time of the judges (3:12-30). Then relations improved somewhat, and some Israelites took refuge there during a famine, including Naomi and her family. Her son married Ruth, a Moabitess who entered into Israel’s history and the royal lineage of King David. Relations deteriorated during Saul’s reign, and David conquered it (2 Samuel 8:2). After Israel and Judah split, Moab joined Ammon and Edom in an attempt to defeat Judah (2 Chronicles 20:1-23). But *Moab and Seir* [Mount Seir, basically Edom] said, *“...the house of Judah is like all the nations, [denying God’s promises to Israel].”* God said, *“I will give it [Moab] for a possession...to the sons of the east [Babylon].”*

**Verses 12-14 – Judgment on Edom.** The Edomites are the descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau (Genesis 32:3; 36:1). The conflict with Israel started when Edom refused to let Israel cross her territory during the time of the wilderness wanderings (Numbers 20:14-21). The hostilities continued throughout the times of the kings. Edom became a vassal of Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s defeat of Egypt in 605 B.C. When Judah revolted in 588 B.C., Edom sided with Babylon in her assaults on Judah (Jeremiah 49:7-22). God said, *“Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance...I will also stretch out My hand against Edom and...I will lay it waste...”*

**Verses 15-17 – Judgment on Philistia.** The Philistines are the descendants of Mizraim, son of Ham, son of Noah (Genesis 10:14). They were Israel’s enemies from the time she entered the Promised Land. Samson (Judges 13–16) fought them, as did Saul and David (Goliath was a Philistine—1 Samuel 17:4, 23). The feud continued throughout the time of the divided kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar established control over both countries [Judah and Philistia]. God said, *“Because the Philistines have acted in revenge...I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines...I will execute great vengeance on them...”* As a nation, they disappeared during the inter-testament times.



## Chapter 26 — Tyre's Destruction

**Chapters 26-28 Are a Judgment on the Ancient City-State of Tyre.** The judgment is divided into four separate oracles, each beginning with the words, *The word of the Lord came to me* (26:1; 27:1; 28:1, 11).

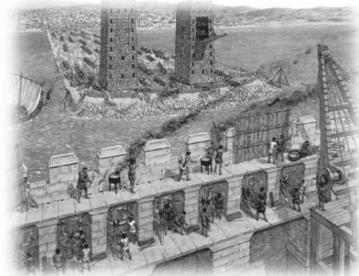
- The **first** oracle (chapter 26) was a direct prophecy of Tyre's destruction.
- The **second** oracle is written as a funeral dirge for the fallen Tyre (chapter 27).
- The **third** oracle is against the "ruler" of Tyre (28:1-10).
- The **fourth** oracle is against the "king" of Tyre (28:11-19).

Tyre was an ancient Phoenician city-state, both on the mainland and as an island just off the coast, in the Mediterranean, located in today's Lebanon about 13 miles north of Israel. Tyre enjoyed great prosperity under King Hiram (980-947 B.C.), who provided men and materials for the construction of David's palace (2 Samuel 5:11-12), Solomon's palace, and the Temple (2 Chronicles 2).

**Verses 1-6 – Tyre's Strength.** The prophecy was given *In the eleventh year, on the first of the month* (587-586 B.C.), but he doesn't say what month. Jerusalem fell July 18, 586 B.C. *Tyre has said concerning Jerusalem, 'Aha.'* Tyre controlled the sea routes between Egypt (and Africa) and the Middle East. Judah controlled the land route. With Jerusalem fallen, that would mean more sea traffic for Tyre.

**Verses 7-14 – Nebuchadnezzar (verse 7) Besieged the Mainland City for Thirteen Years (585-572 B.C.) and Destroyed It.** Ezekiel switched from "he" to "they" in verse 12, indicating the other nations would complete the destruction Nebuchadnezzar began. Alexander the Great besieged the island city in 332 B.C. for six months and finally captured the island city by building a causeway out to it from the debris of the destroyed mainland city. Although areas around Tyre are currently occupied, the ancient city itself has never been rebuilt.

**Verses 15-21 – The Coastal Powers, Dependent on Tyre for their Trade and Commerce, Will be Distressed by Tyre's Fall.** In a different image, God says He will *bring you [Tyre] down with those who go down to the pit...in the lower parts of the earth, i.e.,* to the place of death, from where no one returns.



## Chapter 27 — A Lament over the City

**Verses 1-25 – Ezekiel Compared Tyre to a Ship,** one made of the finest materials by the best of craftsmen and decorated with the most beautiful materials, all done through alliances with many countries. Next, he described their commerce. Basically, they had trade relations with all the countries of the known world at the time and all kinds of goods. Persia is modern Iran. Lud (or Lydia) is the western coast of Asia Minor. Put is Lybia. Tarshish is the southern coast of Spain. Javan is Greece. Tubal and Meshech are both in Asia Minor, possibly including southern Russia. Bethogarmah is Eastern Turkey. Sheba, Dedan and Raamah are in Arabia.

**Verses 26-32 – The Ship Sinks.** Ezekiel described Tyre as a beautiful ship, but now he describes the ship's catastrophic sinking (verses 26-36). Her destruction came from *the east wind*. The east or northeast wind on the Mediterranean Sea was hazardous. It pushed the ships away from the shore into the open sea. In the same way, the Babylonians will come from the east (via the northeast) to

bring destruction on Tyre, and she would sink, like a ship falls *into the heart of the seas*. At the loss of Tyre, the surrounding nations will lament: “*Who is like Tyre, like her who is silent in the midst of the sea.*”

## Chapter 28 — The Fall of the Leader of the Tyre

**Verses 1-10 – The Leader of Tyre.** Ezekiel just prophesied about the city of Tyre. Now he turns to the *leader of Tyre* (Ethbaal III who ruled from 591-572 B.C.). God told him his judgment was *Because your heart is lifted up and you have said, ‘I am god, I sit in the seat of gods’... Yet you are a man and not God.* It was common for rulers to think they were a god—such as the Egyptian Pharaohs, the Syrian Epiphanes, and the Roman Caesars. The comment in verse 3, *you are* [meaning you think you are] *wiser than Daniel* probably means he knew of Daniel’s prophecy.

**Verses 11-19 – The King of Tyre.** This last prophecy against Tyre was a *lamentation over the king of Tyre*. Ezekiel switched words from *leader* (or *ruler*) in verse 2 to *king* in verse 12. From the description in these verses, it seems Ezekiel is talking about an individual who was more than a mere man. The best explanation is that these verses refer to Satan, who was the true “king” of Tyre, the one motivating (and possibly possessing) the human “ruler” of Tyre.



Verse 12 – *You had the seal of perfection, [meaning] full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

Verse 13 – *You were in Eden the garden of God [probably referring to a place in heaven, where] every precious stone was your covering.*

Verse 14 – *You were the anointed [highest and selected] cherub who covers [the angelic realm]. You were on the holy mountain...in the midst of the stones of fire [the presence of God].*

Verse 15 – *Until unrighteousness was found in you. [This is the origin of sin.] Isaiah 14:12-15 describes this as you said in your heart, ‘I will...raise my throne above the stars [angels] of God, ...I will make myself like the Most High.’*

**Verses 16-19 – by the abundance of your trade—**A picture of Satan as trading with mankind, as the human leader of Tyre was involved in trade with many nations. *You were internally filled with violence—*Jesus said the devil *was a murderer from the beginning* (John 8:44). *And you sinned—*everything that is contrary to the character of God is sin. *Therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire—*Satan’s judgment was done in stages:

1. He was cast out of heaven, as his dwelling place (verse 17; Luke 10:18; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8), but he still has access to heaven (Job 1:6-12; Zechariah 3:1-2; Luke 22:31).
2. During the Tribulation, he will be cast out of heaven to the earth (Revelation 12:7-13).
3. During the Millennial Kingdom, he will be confined in the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3).
4. At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, he will be released to the earth to lead a revolt against Jesus (Revelation 20:7-9).
5. Then he will be cast into the lake of fire forever (Revelation 20:10).

**Verses 20-24 – Judgment on Sidon.** Sidon is a sister city to Tyre, 20 miles north up the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. God’s judgment on them will be *pestilence* and *the sword*. God said Sidon was like *a prickling brier or a painful thorn* to Israel. The wicked practices of Baal worship flourished in the northern kingdom of Israel through Ahab’s wife *Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians* (1 Kings 16:31). God destroyed the evil nations surrounding Israel and punished Israel for her idolatry, yet God promised to restore Israel, which He never promised any other nation He destroyed. God will *gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered*. Although Judah returned to the Land for a short time, the twelve tribes did not return to the land until 1948.

**Verses 25-26 – During the Millennial Kingdom, God will:**

- (1) *gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered,*
- (2) *manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations,*
- (3) *they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob.*
- (4) *They will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them.*
- (5) *Then they will know that I am the LORD their God*

## Chapter 29 — The Judgment on Egypt

This prophecy against Egypt (29:1–32:32) was given in seven oracles, each beginning with the phrase *the word of the LORD came to me*, and six of the seven are dated (29:1, 17; 30:1 [undated], 20; 31:1; 32:1, 17). All are in chronological order except 29:17 (the second oracle), which Ezekiel seemed to use to clarify the first oracle.



**Oracle #1, Verses 1-16 – The Sin of Egypt.** This prophecy has three sections, each of which end with *then... [Egypt] will know I am the LORD* (verses 6a, 9, 16). It was received on January 5, 587 B.C., almost a year after the siege of Jerusalem began. God is *against Pharaoh*, who at the time was Hophra (reigned 589-570 B.C.). He claimed, *My Nile is mine, and I myself have made it*. Egypt is compared to a *staff* upon which Judah leaned (in defense against Babylon). God *will bring upon you a sword and will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation*. In verses 9c-16, *Egypt will be desolate forty years*. Nebuchadnezzar attacked the country and probably deported Egyptian captives as he did Judah captives, and they were allowed to return when Persians conquered Babylon (about 33 years later). Allowing 7 years for them to return and rebuild, it would total forty years. *It will never again lift itself up above the nations*. Egypt has never been the power she once was.

**Oracle #2, Verses 17-21 – The Defeat of Egypt by Babylon.** Received on April 26, 571 B.C., this is the one prophecy out of chronological order. The purpose is to show that Nebuchadnezzar would be the one to bring judgment on Egypt as he had on Tyre for 13 years (585-572). *But he [Nebuchadnezzar] and his army had no wages from Tyre*, probably because Tyre shipped off her wealth before she surrendered. So God said, *I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar...and he will carry off her wealth*. *On that day*, in this case, is probably referring to the day when Egypt and Israel are restored, after the Babylonian Captivity. *I will make a horn sprout for...Israel*—a horn usually indicated strength, possibly Judah returning to the Land after the captivity. *I will open your mouth in their midst* probably means that the prophecies of Ezekiel, when they were fulfilled, would become clear to the people.

## Chapter 30

### Oracle #3, Verses 1-19 – The Destruction of Egypt and Her Allies.

Verses 1-2 – Unlike Ezekiel’s other prophecies against Egypt, this one is not dated. It’s divided into four parts, each beginning with ‘*Thus says the Lord God*’ (vv. 2, 6, 10, 13).

Verses 2-5 – *the day of the LORD* [a phrase used here of God’s judgment] *is near*.

Verses 5-9 – *those who support Egypt will fall*. This is the main impact of this oracle. The application is, don’t hang around with people who disobey God.

Verses 10-12 – the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, will destroy Egypt. But three times in these verses God said “*I will...*” to make sure we understand that Nebuchadnezzar is just a tool in God’s hands to bring this about.

Verses 13-19 – *Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also destroy the idols and make the images cease ...”* Then He described the destruction of 8 major cities of Egypt.

**Oracle #4, Verses 20-26 – The Scattering of Egypt.** This was a prophecy that was received on April 29, 587, almost four months after Ezekiel’s first prophecy against Egypt (29:1). This prophecy was written after Babylon defeated Egypt, when Egypt tried to rescue Judah from Babylon (see 29:1). That defeat is pictured as a **broken arm**. Now God will send Babylon against Egypt. He will not allow the broken arm to heal and will break the good arm.

## Chapter 31 — The Similarity of Egypt and Assyria

**Oracle #5, Verses 1-18 – Egypt Compared to Assyria.** This oracle was received on June 21, 587, less than two months after the prophecy recorded in 30:20-26. It is addressed to *Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes*. They thought there was no one like them *in your greatness*. But, in the first nine verses, God compared them to the greatness of *Assyria*, of which He said, *I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, and all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it*. Assyria had invaded Egypt in 633 B.C. and destroyed its capital of Thebes (Naham 3:8-10)—showing it was greater than Egypt, yet Assyria had been destroyed by Babylon, which would soon enter Egypt and destroy it.

The point is, Assyria had attained power and influence from God that exceeded Egypt’s, yet she was destroyed, the object of God’s judgment.

Verses 10-14 – Assyria was judged because of her pride—*its heart is haughty in its loftiness*. Judah (16:56), Tyre (27:3; 28:2), and Egypt (30:6) would all be judged for their pride. God ordered Nineveh’s fall to Nebuchadnezzar’s father in 612 B.C. and the rest of the Assyrian army’s fall to Nebuchadnezzar in 609 B.C.

Verse 18 – “*To which among the trees of Eden* [a metaphorical comparison to the Garden of Eden] *are you thus equal in glory and greatness? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden* [even the Garden of Eden was destroyed] *to the earth beneath* [in death]; *you will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who were slain by the sword* [all earthly accomplishments are the same in death]. *So is Pharaoh and all his hordes!*” declares the Lord GOD.

## Chapter 32 — The Death of Pharaoh and Egypt

**Oracle #6, Verses 1-16 – The Lament for Pharaoh.** This prophecy was received on March 3, 585, two months after the news of Jerusalem’s fall reached the captives in Babylon (33:21). God told Ezekiel to *take up a lamentation over Pharaoh* [Pharaoh Hophra], usually done after one’s death, the fall of Egypt was that certain. God said of Pharaoh, you *compared yourself to a young lion of the nations, yet you are like the monster in the seas*. Pharaoh saw his own actions as good and something to be proud of, but God saw them as evil and monstrous.



The point is to evaluate accomplishments from God’s perspective, and God’s perspective will never accommodate our pride.

Verses 7-8 – *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 and will set darkness on your land.* Ezekiel may have been alluding to the darkness of the ninth plague as a metaphor or a reminder of what God was going to do to Egypt (Exodus 10:21-29).

Notice in verses 13-14 how God will destroy the main thing that has been the pride of Egypt, its water supply. *“I will also destroy all its cattle from beside many waters; And the foot of man will not muddy them anymore [possibly a reference to their irrigation system] and the hoofs of beasts will not muddy them [as they come to the streams for water]. Then I will make their waters settle and will cause their rivers to run like oil,” declares the Lord God.*

**Oracle #7, Verses 17-32 – The Descent into Sheol.** This prophecy was probably received the same as the previous month, which makes this March 17, 585, exactly two weeks later. This is a funeral dirge. It is poetic, so Ezekiel was not giving us an exact description of the afterlife, but several facts are revealed:

- (1) This is *Sheol* (31:15, 16, 17; 32:21, 27, NT *hades* – Luke 16:23), *the pit* (32:18, 24-25, 29-30), or *the nether world* (32:18), not the *lake of fire* (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15, which is usually referred to as “hell”). This *pit* is where unbelievers go when they die awaiting their resurrection to the Great White Throne Judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15.
- (2) The afterlife *pit* is filled with masses of unbelievers from all places and all times (verses 18-20).
- (3) They will refer back to the place where we are now as *the land of the living* (verses 23-32).
- (4) The only comfort for those in this sheol pit nether world is that all other unbelievers are down there with them (verses 30-32). Unbelievers are *the uncircumcised*—Ezekiel used this phrase 10 times in chapter 32 (verses 19, 21, 24-30, 32). All, except Edom, caused *terror in the land of the living. Assyria is there and all her company* [her whole army]. *Pharaoh and all his army* will be there. *“Though I instilled a terror of him in the land of the living, yet he will be made to lie down ... along with those slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his hordes,” declares the Lord GOD.*

## Applications from Chapters 25–32

1. Nations, like Tyre and its king, are motivated and influenced by Satan but under the sovereign control of God and responsible to Him for their actions and decisions (Daniel 2:21).
2. The nations can be mighty, with great glory while in the land of the living, but it counts for nothing in the afterlife. Death is the ultimate equalizer. The great nations died like the lesser nations. Their greatness did not follow them, nor keep them from dying.
3. The nations (i.e., the people in the nations) are still personally held accountable for their actions, even though they were used by God in His plan. For example, God may have made them profitable, but He did not make them prideful!
4. A key part of God's judgment is how the non-believers treat God's people.
5. All the non-believers are pictured as being in the same place, and they are in a separate place away from the people of God. The concepts of heaven and hell are only vaguely alluded to in the Old Testament and are not described until Christ and the apostles.

## Questions from Chapters 25–32

1. In chapter 25, God judged four nations. Which one of these people are not biologically related to Israel?
  - A. The Moabites
  - B. The Ammonites
  - C. The Philistines
  - D. The Edomites
2. God said, *Because the Philistines have acted in revenge...I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines...I will execute great vengeance on them.* They finally died out as a people
  - A. By the time of Saul
  - B. By the time of David
  - C. By the time of Christ
3. Verses 28:11-19 are likely talking about Satan rather than the earthly leader of Tyre because
  - A. The word for *leader* changes to *king*.
  - B. The description goes way beyond that of an earthly leader.
  - C. The leader is described as being over the angels of God.
  - D. A and B
4. In 28:25-36, God said that He will (1) *gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered*, (2) *manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations*, (3) *they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob*. He is referring to
  - A. The time of returning and rebuilding after Ezra and Nehemiah
  - B. The present time, since Israel became a nation in 1947
  - C. The future Millennial Kingdom
5. Ezekiel prophesied that Egypt would be defeated by
  - A. Judah
  - B. Assyria
  - C. Babylon
6. Egypt would be destroyed because of its pride. This was seen in the pride it had in its
  - A. Civil accomplishments
  - B. Water supplies
  - C. Conquered people
  - D. A and B
  - E. All of the above

Answers: 1. C. 2. C. 3. D. 4. C. 5. C. 6. E.

### III. Chapters 33–48 — Blessings Prophesied for Israel

#### A. Chapters 33–39, Israel's Future Spiritual Blessings

In chapters 1–24, we learned that Judah would be judged for her sins.

In chapters 25–32, we learned that the nations surrounding Judah would be judged for their sins.

In chapters 33–48, we will learn about a united, restored, and blessed Israel.

- God will restore her to the Promised Land.
- Jerusalem will again be the center of the world.
- God's Temple will be rebuilt.
- God will fulfill all His promises He made to Israel.

### Chapter 33 — Ezekiel Reappointed as a Watchman

**Verses 1-20 – A Repeat of Ezekiel's Duties as a Watchman.** These verses repeat two ideas already emphasized in the book:

- 1) Ezekiel appointed as God's watchman to warn Judah of the coming judgment (3:16-27)
- 2) Personal responsibility for moral behavior, discussed in chapter 18, including the appeal *why will you die oh house of Israel* (18:31 and 33:11)

But now, the watchman and the individual's responsibility are in a context of restoration. The difference is that "At least the exiles had come to recognize that God's judgment had come because of their sin (verse 10). Previously (chapter 18), the people had blamed their parents' sin for any coming judgment. Now they recognized fully their own wickedness was causing them to waste away" (*Expositors Bible Commentary*).

**Verses 21-22 – The Opening of Ezekiel's Mouth, and the Pivot Point of His Ministry.** On January 9, 585 B.C., the news "*The city has been taken*" reached the exiles. One of the survivors traveled several hundred miles to bring the news to the exiles. This was in *the twelfth year of our exile*. Some Hebrew manuscripts read *in the eleventh year* (as does Jeremiah 39:2), which would mean that Ezekiel received the news six months after the fall. Some believe two systems of dating are involved (Palestinian and Babylonian), but more likely, a half a year passed before Ezekiel received the report. Ezekiel had been silent, speaking only words of God's judgments (3:26-27) for seven years (since the *fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile* (1:2). *He opened my mouth at the time they [the refugees] came to me in the morning, so my mouth was opened and I was no longer speechless. This was a pivot point of his ministry because the report confirmed that Ezekiel was a true prophet of God.*

**Verses 23-29 – The People who Remained in Israel after Jerusalem's Fall Refused to Acknowledge God's Judgment.** They said, *Abraham was only one, yet he possessed the land; so to us who are many the land has been given as a possession.* If Abraham, being only one Jew, had the right to the Land, surely the survivors, being many Jews, have the right to the Land. But there was a big difference: Abraham was righteous and those in the land were wicked. *You lift up your eyes to your idols as you shed blood...you commit abominations.* Possession of the land depended on spiritual obedience, not on numerical strength. Therefore, they *will fall by the sword...be given to the beasts to be devoured...die of pestilence. ...I will make the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations which they have committed.*

**Verses 30-33 — Now God Spoke through Ezekiel to the Exiles Living in Babylon.** They liked to gather around Ezekiel and hear what he had to say. *“Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the LORD. The problem was, the people hear your words, but they do not do them. In fact, the message excited them as a sensual song by one who had a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument would excite them, but they do not practice them.*

*But when it comes to pass—as surely it will—then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst.*

## **Chapter 34 — The Present False Shepherds Contrasted with the Future True Shepherd**

The leaders of Israel were often called shepherds (Psalm 78:70-72; Isaiah 44:28; 63:11; Jeremiah 23:1-4; 25:34-38). They were to be strong, caring examples, who protected their nation as a flock. First, Ezekiel described the sins of the shepherds (verses 1-6), then he pronounced God’s judgment on them (verses 7-10).

### **The False Shepherds (34:1-10)**

#### **Verses 1-6 – The Shepherds Committed Sins of Three Kinds:**

- (1) The shepherds put their own interests above the interests of the flock. *Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?* They looked at their flock as a source of wealth for themselves rather than as people who needed to be taken care of and fed.
- (2) The shepherds were cruel to their flock. *The sickly...the diseased...the broken...the scattered... the lost—none of these were taken care of. Instead, with force and with severity you have dominated them.*
- (3) They let the flock be *scattered*, probably referring to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The leaders were to protect their nation so their people would not be scattered to other countries.

**Verses 7-10 – The Shepherds Did Not Do their Job.** And now, the flock was scattered. Therefore, God said, *“I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them...I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.”* For example, the Davidic line of the kings was removed. There has not been a king on David’s throne for 2,600 years.

### **The Future True Shepherd (34:11-31)**

**Verses 11-16 – God Would Do what the Former Shepherds of Israel Failed to Do:** He will *search for His scattered sheep...care for My sheep...deliver them...bring them out from the peoples...gather them...bring them to their own land...feed them in a good pasture...lead them to rest...seek the lost ...bind up the broken...strengthen the sick. ...But the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.* This was not fulfilled when the exiles returned from the Babylonian Captivity. It will only be fulfilled in the future Millennial Kingdom.

**Verses 17-22 – God Will Judge between the Individual Sheep.** *I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats.* Before the Millennial Kingdom begins, God will sort out the righteous from the unrighteous (Matthew 25:31-46). Only the righteous will enter into the Millennium. Some sheep not only *feed in the good pasture*, but they make it worse for the *lean* sheep. They not only *drink of the clear water*, they also *foul the rest with their feet*.

**Verses 23-24 – God Will Set Over Them One Shepherd, My Servant David.** This is most likely the resurrected King David who will be on the throne on the earth during the Millennial Kingdom. Notice he is called a *prince*, not the king (the King is Jesus Christ). This same prince will make sin offerings for himself during the millennial period (Ezekiel 45:22; 46:4), something the sinless Son of God would not do. Other passages refer to David as the ruler during the Millennium (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5).

**Verses 25-31 – God Will Then Make a Covenant of Peace with Them.** This is the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34, also described in Isaiah 11:1-9 and 65:2. God will *eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may...sleep in the woods. ...I will cause showers to come down in their season...they will be showers of blessing...the earth will yield its increase...they will no longer be a prey to the nations...no one will make them afraid.*

*Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people.*

## **Chapter 35 — The Enemy Edom Is Destroyed**

The Edomites are the descendants of Esau, one of the oldest hostilities (between Jacob and Esau, in the second generation from Abraham). In fact, one whole Old Testament book, the book of Obadiah, is written just about the judgment of Edom. Mt. Seir is the name of the mountain range southeast of the Dead Sea, where the Edomites lived.

The question is: why give a second prophecy here (the first being in chapter 25) about the destruction of Edom in this section on Israel's restoration? A possible answer is, because the territory that was promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18) included the mountains of Edom. The Edomites had said, *these two nations and these two lands will be mine, and we will possess them* (Ezekiel 35:10). But Edom's land will belong to Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. Edom's treatment of Israel determined her own end. Edom became an object lesson to all the nations. God will judge them on how they treat Israel (Matthew 25:31-46), as God had promised in the Abrahamic Covenant: *I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse* (Genesis 12:3). So both things are true. God predetermined the fate of the Edomites, and the Edomites determined their own fate.

## **Chapter 36 — Israel's Land and People Will Be Blessed**

In a sense, chapter 36 is the opposite of chapter 35. When God intercedes on Israel's behalf, the *mountains* of Israel's enemies will be judged (35:1-3, 8), but the *mountains of Israel* will be blessed. Israel's future restoration seemed so remote after her fall to Babylon, that God put great emphasis on His character rather than external circumstances as the basis of the fulfillment. Ten times in this chapter Ezekiel states *Thus says the Lord GOD...* (verses 2-7, 13, 22, 33, 37).

**Verses 1-12 – The Land Will Be Restored.** Here God addressed the physical Land, *to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the forsaken cities.* God will reverse the judgment of 6:1-7 on the mountains: *But you, O mountains of Israel, you will... bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come.* This was not about the return under Ezra and Nehemiah but something which will take place during the Millennial Kingdom when the whole nation returns to the Land.

**Verses 13-36 – The Israelites Will Be Restored to the Land.** In verses 13-15, God said, *I will not let you hear insults from the nations anymore.*

In verses 16-21, God gave them a reminder—*when...Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it... Therefore I poured out My wrath on them.*

Then God made **four points** about their restoration:

- (1) In verses 22-23, we learn that there was no intrinsic value to Israel which made God restore her—*It is not for your sake, O...Israel. Rather, I am about to act...for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations.* He showed His justice when He punished Israel for her sin. Now He would show His holiness when He restores Israel, *when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.*
- (2) In verses 24-32, we learn that God will also purify Israel from all her sins—*I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.* Then Israel will have a new spiritual life—*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you...I will remove the heart of stone...and give you a heart of flesh* (see 11:19).
- (3) In verses 33-36, we read that when God rebuilds Israel, it will be like a huge object lesson to the nations around it. *They will say, “This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden” ...then the nations that are left around about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places.*
- (4) In verses 37-38, God said, *“This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them...I will increase their men like a flock...like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts.”* This is one of the three points of the Abrahamic Covenant, an abundance of people: *“I will make you a great nation.”*

## Applications from Chapters 33–36

- 1. Notice the emphasis on free will in chapter 33.** In the midst of God telling Ezekiel what He will sovereignly do, He tells Ezekiel, for the second time, that he is responsible to be a watchman, warning the house of Israel. Notice the free will in verses 11-12. *'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?... The righteousness of a righteous man will not deliver him in the day of his transgression, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stumble because of it in the day when he turns from his wickedness.'*
- 2. Pastors, priests, mission leaders and evangelists need to take warning from chapter 34.** *Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?* All leadership in the church is based upon responsibility, not authority. So when you accept positions assigned to you by your church and/or Christian organizations, be careful that you do not end up using them to benefit your own ego, or for your own personal benefit.
- 3. There is an important moral principle in chapter 35.** Don't kick someone when they are down, even if they are down because they deserve it. Don't mistreat those who are suffering because of God's judgment, or the judgment of the sin itself (say, having AIDS, being in prison, bankruptcy or having some other crisis, even when it is due to sin). It is wrong to join in God's judgment. Only God can judge. We must follow the lines of correct moral behavior, even toward those whom God judges or will judge. We must be judgmental (take a stand against sin) but not pursue justice. Also, notice that this answers the dilemma often posed by atheists. "If God judges people, then we are going against God if we help suffering people." The answer from Ezekiel 35 is clearly, "No, you should not refuse help to the needy, no matter what God is doing in their lives."
- 4. In chapter 36, we see God's commitment, not only to His covenant with His people but to His Land.** Today we ask, "Why is the Land desolate?" In the kingdom, people will say, *This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden.*

## Questions from Chapters 33–36

- Ezekiel chapter 33 repeats the idea already mentioned in chapters
  - 3 and 18
  - 12 and 15
  - 14 and 26
- The pivot point of Ezekiel's ministry was when
  - The report came about the destruction of Jerusalem
  - Ezekiel agreed to be a watchman to warn the house of Israel
  - God began to give him the prophecy that Israel would be restored to the land
- When God restores Israel to the land, He will
  - Judge the shepherds individually
  - Judge the people individually
  - Judge the land according the sins of the people
  - A and B
  - All of the above
- True or False? Edom was going to be destroyed because they thought Israel would belong to them.

Answers: 1. A. 2. A. 3. D. 4. True (35:10).

## Chapter 37 — The Nation Is Restored

Chapter 37 illustrates chapter 36. But in this chapter, God promised two things: restoration and unification.

### Verses 1-14 – The Vision of the Dry Bones – Restoration.

Verses 1-10 – God *brought* Ezekiel by the Spirit of the LORD, as God had done before with Ezekiel (3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5). And God set Ezekiel *down in the middle of the valley*.

Nothing is known about this valley except what's here in these verses. *And it was full of bones...there were very many on the surface of the valley...they were very dry.* God asked Ezekiel an interesting question: “*Son of man, can these bones live?*” Well,

Ezekiel knew that, humanly speaking, it was impossible, but he was talking to God, and only God can give life (John 1:4, *In Him was life...*). So Ezekiel guardedly answered, “*O Lord GOD, You know.*” Then God had Ezekiel prophesy over the bones: *Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, “Behold, I will cause breath [or spirit] to enter you that you may come to life.”*



Verses 11-14 – The divine interpretation given within an apocalyptic vision should be followed carefully. God said the restoration of Israel would be in two stages: first physical (or national) restoration and then spiritual renewal (breath is Spirit). The creation of man followed a similar pattern: first the body, then the breath (Genesis 2:7). Today, we see a physical restoration, but not a spiritual restoration of Israel. When God said, “*I will open your graves and...I will bring you into the land of Israel,*” He was probably not talking about physically raising people from the dead, but raising the nation from the dead. A people scattered throughout the world will come back to the Land and be a nation once more. This happened in earnest after 1947. *And then you will know that I am the LORD.* The spiritual part of this will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom when Israel will worship Jesus Christ.

### Verses 15-28 – The Sign of the Two Sticks United – Unification.

Verses 15-17 – Ezekiel was to *take...one stick and write on it, “For Judah...”* and *then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph...Ephraim...house of Israel.”* After the reign of King Solomon, the twelve tribes of Israel split in 931 B.C. The Southern Kingdom was known as Judah because it was the larger of the two tribes (Benjamin being the other tribe), and its kings were of the tribe of Judah, in the Davidic line (1 Kings 12:22-24). The Northern Kingdom was made up of ten tribes and was called Israel. [So, as always, context is crucial. When reading the word “Israel,” you must ask, “Is this the man Jacob who was renamed Israel, the united country of Israel, or the Northern Kingdom of Israel?”] There is no tribe of “Joseph” which inherited land. When Jacob (Israel) came to Egypt to visit Joseph, he adopted Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as his own, so Joseph would get a double inheritance of the Land (Genesis 48:5). The Northern Kingdom of Israel is sometimes called Ephraim (Hosea 5:3, 5, 11-14), probably because Ephraim was the strongest and most influential tribe. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken captive to Assyria in 722 B.C., and Judah was taken captive to Babylon in 605, 597, and 586 B.C.

Ezekiel was to take the two sticks and *join them...one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.*

Verses 18-28 – God’s interpretation of the sticks. He said, “*I will take...the tribes of Israel...with...Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.*” So not only is God going to re-

store the people to the Land, He is going to unite them into one nation. This did not happen when Ezra and Nehemiah returned and Zerubbabel built the second Temple, but it did happen after 1947. *My servant David will be their prince*—This is likely King David in his resurrected, eternal body.

## Chapters 38-39 — The Attack by Gog of the land of Magog

Chapters 38 and 39 describe a future military attack on Israel. We will look at both these chapters together in three sections:

- (1) We will look at **what** happens (observation: the most sure information).
- (2) We will look at **who** is participating in this battle (interpretation: less sure information).
- (3) We will look at **when** this battle will occur (interpretation: least sure information).

### (1) What Happens?

## Chapter 38

Verses 1-6 – God told Ezekiel to prophesy against *Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal... Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold I am against you...I will turn you about...and I will bring you out, and all your army”*—God in His sovereignty will use Gog and his army in God’s plan for Israel. Yet Gog will make a free will decision, *thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan* (verse 10). Other countries will join the alliance against Israel: *Persia, Ethiopia and Put...Gomer...Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops—many peoples with you—a huge army from many nations.*



Verses 7-9 – The battle will be *in the latter years*. It will be after the Jews are back in the Land, *gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel*. The Jews will be *living securely*.

Verses 10-16 – Gog’s purpose in attacking Israel will be *to capture spoil and to seize plunder*. Israel’s prosperity will make her a strategic target.

Verses 17-23 – God Himself will defeat Gog. God will ask Gog, *“Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel...that I would bring you against them?”* There is no written record of this prophecy, but evidently there was an oral prophecy. When the invasion happens, God’s *fury will mount up in [His] anger*. God will send *a great earthquake a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone*. *Brimstone* is burning sulfur, which may be volcanic ash (the Sea of Galilee is the dormant bowl of a volcano).

## Chapter 39

Verses 1-5 – God will bring the invading armies *against the mountains of Israel*. God will *strike* them, and they will *fall on the mountains of Israel*. This army will then be *as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field*.

Verse 6 – Also, God will punish the homelands of the invading armies. *I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety*, i.e., the farthest reaches of the known world (see Ezekiel 26:15, 18; 27:3 6-7, 15, 35).

Verses 7-8 – With this judgment, *the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel*. And in Israel itself, God’s *holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore* by Israel’s sins, especially their idolatry.

Verses 9-10 – The Israelites will *make fires with the weapons* of the fallen soldiers. ... *for seven years they will make fires of them*.

Verses 11-16 – Israel will also bury Gog’s dead in a valley *east of the sea*, probably east of the Dead Sea, in ancient Moab, today’s country of Jordan, where the Israelites traveled, under the leadership of Moses, before they entered the Land. *For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land*. Certain men will be appointed to go throughout the Land to send the bodies to the valley for burial. *At the end of the seven months they will make a search*. Not even so much as a bone of the invading army is to be left in Israel. It is such a huge operation, that a town will be set up in the valley to accommodate those cleaning the Land. That town will be called Hamonah, i.e., “hordes.”

Verses 17-20 – Expanding on verse 4, God said the corpses of the fallen armies will be food for the birds and wild beasts. *They will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth*.

Verses 21-29 – There are two results from this battle: (1) *I will set My glory among the nations—* when God defeats them in the battle. (2) *The house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward...for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel* (see 36:27; 37:14; Joel 2:28).

## **(2) Who Participates in this Battle?**

Ezekiel 38:1-7 gives ten names as participants in the invasion of Israel:

- **Magog** — There are three references to Magog in the Bible: (1) the table of nations in Genesis 10:2-5 lists Magog as a descendant of Noah’s son Japheth, indicating an European people, (2) here in Ezekiel, and (3) in Revelation 20:8, referring to the final battle after the Millennial Kingdom. The most common identity for Magog is in Central Asia. Josephus said, “Magog founded the Magogians, called Scythians by the Greeks. Scythians were a nomadic tribe who inhabited the ancient territory from Central Asia across the southern part of ancient Russia.” Historically, the Magogites must have emigrated northward from Ararat in very early times. Historians agree that the Magogites were divided into two distinct races, one Japhetic, or European, the other Turanian, or Asiatic. Today, this area is inhabited by the former Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and possibly northern parts of Afghanistan. All these countries have one thing in common—Islam. Militant Islam has been on the rise in these countries since the fall of the Soviet Union. Radical Islamic groups in these countries are working to reunite central Asian nations and ultimately the entire Muslim world. It is from this part of the world that a leader will arise to bring together a great coalition of nations to invade Israel.
- **Rosh** — Some versions translate “Rosh” as the adjective “chief,” other versions have translated it as a proper noun “Rosh.” The least credible support of the proper noun would be because Ezekiel’s “Rosh” sounds like “Rus” or “Russia.” Sounding similar doesn’t mean they are the same

thing. Neither should we identify “Meshech” with “Moscow” or “Tubal” with “Tobolsk” because they sound similar. It seems the translation of “rosh” as an adjective is more believable.

- **Meshech and Tubal** — The sixth and fifth sons of Japheth, the son of Noah (Genesis 10:2). Ezekiel 27:13 mentions them as trading partners with Tyre (modern Lebanon). They probably refer to the ancient Moshi/Mushki and Tubalu/Tibareni who dwelled in the area round, primarily south of the Black and Caspian Sea in Ezekiel’s day. Today these nations would be in the modern country of Turkey, parts of Southern Russia and Northern Iran. Again, these are all areas with a Muslim majority.
- **Gomer** — The first son of Japheth. The Gomerites were the ancient Cimmerians in what is today Turkey.
- **Beth-Togarmah** — Togarmah is the third son of Gomer. *Beth* at the beginning of the name is the Hebrew word for “house” or “place of.” In Ezekiel’s time, there was a city in Cappadocia (modern Turkey) known as Tegarma, Tagarma, Til-garimmu, and Takarama.

The possibility that four of the names mentioned in Ezekiel are now in Turkey makes a strong argument for Turkey being a part of the invasion of Israel. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Turkey has been gaining inroads in Central Asia (Magog). It is linked to Central Asia both ethnically and linguistically, and has a growing number of political parties in support of opposition to Israel, the establishment of a Turkish Islamic Republic, and the worldwide rule of Islam.

- **Persia** — This is the modern nation of Iran. It was called Persia until 1935 when it was changed to Iran, and then in 1979 it was changed to the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- **Cush** — The ancient kingdom of Cush in Ezekiel’s time was the land just south of Egypt on the Nile River. Today this land is called Sudan. It is the home of the National Islamic Front, ruled by an Islamic military dictatorship, home to Osama bin Laden from 1991-96, and harbors countless Islamic terrorist groups.
- **Put** — The land just west of Egypt, modern day Libya. Libya is another sponsor of terrorism and openly refuses to recognize Israel’s right to even exist.
- **and many people with you** — Other nations who might join this alliance are Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. All of them are Islamic nations and would not hesitate to support the destruction of Israel if given the opportunity.
- Verse 13 – **Sheba and Dedan** are ancient names for what is modern day Saudi Arabia. **Tarshish** is most commonly agreed to be ancient Tartessus or the area of present day Spain in Western Europe. Perhaps Ezekiel mentions them here indicating they will join in denouncing the invasion. Interestingly, today Saudi Arabia is the only Arab nation who consistently sides with the West against the radical Islamic elements around the world.

**Conclusion:** If this battle happened today, it seems like the army would be a coalition of Islamic countries invading Israel.

### **(3) When Will this Battle Occur?**

This is a harder question. One thing is clear, no past historical events match this prophecy, so it still awaits future fulfillment.

- 1) Some say this attack is the same attack at the end of Christ’s millennial reign in Revelation 20:7-9. The argument for that is based in the same title for the leader *Gog and Magog*. But there are several flaws with this idea. The results of the two battles are different. Why would the people remain on earth after the battle to burn the weapons of war for seven years (Ezekiel 39:9-10) instead of entering immediately into eternity (Revelation 21:1-4)? In Ezekiel, the battle is one of the catalysts God will use to draw Israel to Himself (Ezekiel 39:7, 22-29) and to end her captiv-

ity. But the battle in Revelation 20 happens after Israel has been faithful to her God and enjoyed His blessings for 1000 years.

- 2) It is possible that this battle happens near the first part of the Tribulation. The attack will come when Israel is at peace (Ezekiel 38:3, 11). This would provide the time needed (7 months) to bury the dead (Ezekiel 39:12-13) and the 7 years of time to burn the weapons (39:9-10).
- 3) There is no specific evidence to support or deny the idea that this battle happens before the Rapture. There is no need for the Rapture to happen in order for this battle to take place. The Islamic forces seem to be setting up for this battle during our time. The main argument against this being a pre-rapture battle is that Israel is living securely, although it can be argued that they are living securely today, even though not peacefully.

## Applications from Chapters 37–39

- 1. The character of a person does not change, except at salvation.** In chapter 37, God gave Ezekiel a vision of Israel's restoration with a picture of dry bones taking on flesh and living. That's not something dry bones can do by themselves. It's up to God. The same is true for us. We are incurable sinners incapable of changing our character. All we can do is humbly admit that, and come to God through the blood of Christ, letting Him put flesh on our dry bones.
- 2. Do your job, don't try to do God's job for Him.** God said He would restore both houses of Israel. The southern kingdom attempted to restore the kingdom themselves by rebuilding the Temple and establishing synagogues and Rabbinical Judaism. But it was all destroyed in 70 A.D. God said He would rebuild Israel, and it would be both houses, Israel and Judah. Also, it would be both physical and spiritual. Jesus said He would build His kingdom. We are to pray for Him to do that (*Your kingdom come* – Matthew 6:10), as we go about making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2). But we are not to bring about His kingdom for Him.
- 3. 100% sovereignty of God, 100% free will of man.** Once again, as on every page of the Bible, we see God's sovereignty and man's free will in Ezekiel. God said of Gog in the land of Magog, *I will turn you about ... and I will bring you out, and all your army*—God in His sovereignty will use Gog and his army in God's plan for Israel. Yet Gog will make a free will decision, *thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan*.
- 4. Know the signs of the times.** The purpose of studying prophecy is not to be able to predict the future but to confirm the past. When we learn that God will unite these nations against Israel and we see that these are exactly the nations forming a hatred for Israel today, we can see that God's Word is literally true. It's not about predicting when this battle will occur, but about seeing that the stage is being set exactly as God predicted. And when it happens, those at that time will be able to confirm that God had indeed predicted exactly what has happened – as precisely as He has done in the past.

## Questions from Chapters 37–39

- The dry bones putting on flesh in chapter 37 represents Israel's
  - Restoration
  - Unification
  - Both restoration and unification
- The two sticks of chapter 37 represents Israel's
  - Restoration
  - Unification
  - Both restoration and unification
- Most of the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38 are
  - Arabs
  - Muslims
  - Former Soviet Union
- The land of Magog* is probably
  - Russia
  - Eurasia
  - Turkey
- True or False? The battle of Ezekiel 37–38 will probably occur at the end of the tribulation.

Answers: 1. A. 2. B. 3. B. 4. B. 5. False.

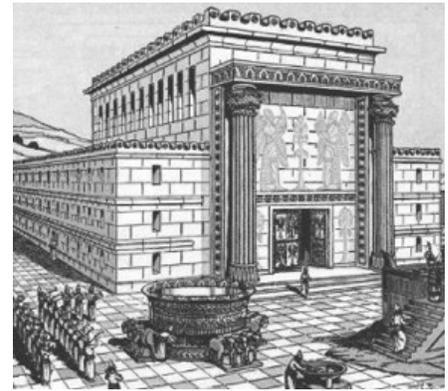
## B. Chapters 40–48 — Conditions Surrounding the Millennial Temple

### Chapters 40–43 — A New Temple

In Ezekiel 37:26-28, God had promised Israel that He would place His sanctuary among His people. Now in chapters 40–43, the plans for the new Temple are given.

#### Three different interpretations of chapters 40–43:

**#1. Ezekiel Was Predicting a Rebuilding of Solomon’s Temple after the Babylonian Captivity.** But since the second Temple was not Solomon’s Temple, nor did it fit the description of Ezekiel 40–43, this would assume Ezekiel was wrong, and no prophet speaking under God’s authority ever uttered a false prediction (Deuteronomy 18:21-22; Matthew 5:17-18). Also, Ezekiel predicted both the northern and southern kingdom would return, which did not happen during the rebuilding after the Babylonian Captivity.



**#2. Ezekiel Was Metaphorically Prophesying about the Church, Not a Literal Temple.** This is the view of covenant/reformed theology, which believes the promises to Israel are figuratively fulfilled in the church. This view violates the normal meaning of Ezekiel’s words. Those who hold this view are inconsistent because they interpret Ezekiel’s earlier, now-fulfilled, prophecies literally, but they interpret his yet-unfulfilled prophecies symbolically. This also violates Ephesians 3, where Paul said the church was a mystery unknown to the Old Testament prophets.

**#3. Ezekiel Was Describing a Future Literal Temple that Will Be Built During the Millennial Kingdom.** This is the most reasonable conclusion because it holds to a consistent literal fulfillment to all of Ezekiel’s prophecy.

**Why describe the millennial Temple in detail?** We are not told, but most likely it was because:

1. The sanctuary was the visible symbol of God’s presence among His people. Earlier (Ezekiel 8–11), Ezekiel had described God’s glory departing from Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem. But in these chapters, we see God’s glory returning to the Millennial Temple (43:1-5).
2. The new Temple would become the visible reminder to the Israelites of their relationship to God through His New Covenant. In the same way, God gave detailed instructions for building the Tabernacle to mark the beginning of the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 25–40), He also gave the detailed plans for His new Temple of worship, which marks the beginning of the New Covenant.
3. This Temple distinguishes an age to come (designated as 1000 years in Revelation 20) which is different from the (first) Temple of Solomon, the (second) Temple after the Babylonian Exile, the church age where believers are the temple, and New Jerusalem where there is no temple.

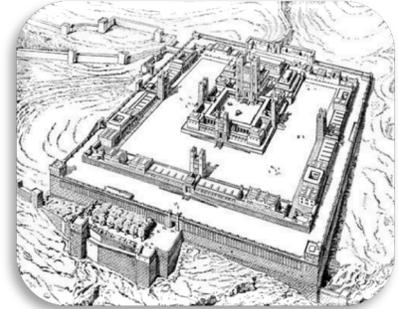
## Chapter 40

**Verses 1-4 – In the Twenty-fifth Year of Our Exile, at the Beginning of the Year.** Sometime in 573 B.C. At the Exodus (Exodus 12:1-2), the Israelite religious New Year began in Nisan (April-May). However, later in Israel’s history, Tishri (October-November) became the first month of the

secular calendar. So the date would be either April 28, 573 B.C. or October 22, 573 B.C. (which was also the Day of Atonement—Leviticus 23:27). In chapters 8–11, in a vision, Ezekiel was given a tour of sinful Jerusalem. In Ezekiel’s real time, Jerusalem was a destroyed city. But this vision God gives to Ezekiel is of the Jerusalem in the far distant future. Then Ezekiel was addressed by *a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze*—probably an angel, whose job was to guide, measure, and interpret for Ezekiel what he was seeing *with a line of flax and a measuring rod [lit. reed] in his hand*. He is going to give specific measurements of the Temple, and Ezekiel was told to *give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show it to you. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see*.

### Verses 5-27 – The Outer Court

Verse 5 –A common cubit was about 18 inches long. A long cubit (used by the Egyptians and probably by Ezekiel) was 21 inches. So the measuring rod (reed) was probably 10 ½ feet (3.2 meters) in length. So the wall surrounding the Temple was 10 ½ feet (3.2 meters) thick and 10 ½ feet (3.2 meters) high.



Verses 6-16 – Ezekiel passed into the outer court through *the gate which faced east*. This was one of three gates leading into the outer court. Because it faced east, it was the most important gate (see 44:1-3). He describes it in detail, with *its steps...threshold...guards’ alcoves...and the porch of the gate was faced inward (toward the Temple)... on each side pillar were palm tree ornaments. There were windows all around*. So through the gate was a passage with three alcoves for the guards on each side (similar to the ones excavated at Megiddo and Hazor).

Verses 17-19 – Entering the *outer court...there were chambers and a pavement...thirty chambers*. These rooms were probably equally spaced on the north, east, and south walls. The use of these rooms is not stated. Perhaps they are meeting rooms for the people when they celebrate the feasts (see Jeremiah 35:2).

Verses 20-27 – Ezekiel is led to the northern and the southern gate which have the same dimensions as the east gate. There is no gate on the west side (because the Temple backs up to the wall).

### Verses 28-47 – The Inner Court

Verses 28-37 – The gates of the inner court. Ezekiel passed through another large gate into the inner court. It was built on a higher level, allowing him to view the arrangements for preparing the sacrifices (verses 39-43) and certain rooms set apart for the priests (verses 45-46). He also described the south (verses 27-28), east (verses 32-34), and north (verses 35-38) gates to the inner court.

Verses 38-43 – At the sides of the inner gates there were eight tables set up for slaughtering the burnt offering and the sin offerings. The sacrifices prepared on these eight tables would then be offered on the altar in the inner court. In verse 46 – it’s *the sons of Zadok* who keep charge of the altar. Solomon deposed Abiathar (of the house of Eli, which God cursed) and put Zadok in his place (1 Kings 2:26-27; 1 Samuel 2:30-36).

### Animal Sacrifices in the Millennial Kingdom

Many have objected to the thought of animal sacrifices being reinstated during the Millennium since Christ’s sacrifice is sufficient and the book of Hebrews forbids animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:26). Some use this to justify taking the passage symbolically rather than literally. But there is no

difficulty if we understand the function of sacrifices. Animal sacrifices were never able to be a propitiation for human sin; only the sacrifice of Christ could do that (John 2:2; Hebrews 10:1-4, 10). We might ask the question, “Why do we take Communion?” The answer is to remember the Lord’s death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:24, 26). After He comes again, the Communion will end, and animal sacrifices will replace it as a remembrance of the cross because the church will be grafted out of God’s program and Israel will be grafted back in (Romans 11:11-27). Communion is for the church, animal sacrifices are for Israel, and the Millennial Kingdom is a reinstatement of Israel. The slaughtering of these animals will be vivid reminders of the Messiah’s suffering and death. Other passages also refer to a sacrificial system in the Millennium (Isaiah 56:7; 66:20-23; Jeremiah 33:18; Zechariah 14:16-21; Malachi 3:3-4). [Verses 48-49 belong with chapter 41.]

## **Chapter 41 (40:48-41:26) — The Temple Itself**

**Verses 1-26 (beginning with 40:48-49) – A Description of the Temple Building Proper.**

Ezekiel looked up at the Temple building, then climbed the stairs and entered through the vestibule into the outer sanctuary (41:1). As he walked, he described what the angel measured in great detail—the porch (40:48-49), the Holy Place (41:1-2), *the Most Holy Place* (verses 3-4), the *side chambers* (three floors with 30 chambers per floor for storage (verses 5-11). He measured a large building behind the Temple (verse 12), the total measurements of the Temple and its immediate surroundings (verses 13-17), plus the interior of the Temple (verses 18-26). This included the altar (of incense) 5 1/4 feet (1.6 meters) high and 3 1/2 feet (1 meter) square (verse 22). The Temple was 87 1/2 feet (26 1/2 meters) wide and 175 feet (53 meters) long, about half the size of a football or soccer field.

## **Chapter 42 — The Outer Rooms**

**Verses 1-14 – Adjacent Rooms.** Leaving the Temple itself, Ezekiel described several adjacent rooms to be used by the priests. These rooms were connected to the inner court, with entrances from the outer court. There were two buildings on the north side with a common corridor 17 1/2 feet (5.3 meters) wide (verse 4). There was a row of rooms next to the outer court and another row of rooms next to the sanctuary. These rooms were three stories high with an identical group of rooms on the Temple’s south side (verses 10-12). It’s in those rooms that the priests will eat the most holy offerings (verses 13-14) and store their garments (44:19).

**Verses 15-20 – External Dimensions.** After the angel measured everything within the Temple complex, he led Ezekiel outside to record the external dimensions of the Temple (verses 15-20). The complex was a square measuring 875 feet (267 meters) on each side. The total area occupied by this Temple area was 765,625 square feet (233,362.5 meters)—enough square feet for more than 13 football (or soccer) fields.

## **Chapter 43**

**Verses 1-12 – Ezekiel Saw the Glory of God Returning.** From the east, the glory entered the Temple through the gate facing east. A dramatic reversal of the departure of the Lord’s glory in chapters 10–11. Then the Spirit lifted Ezekiel up (as in 3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1) and brought him into the inner court in front of the Temple building, and the glory of the LORD filled the Temple building. Then someone spoke to Ezekiel, saying, *this is the place of My throne where I will live among the sons of Israel forever* (verse 7). This seems to be the Messiah speaking. The offering of sacrifices is to cleanse the Temple, not for the One on the throne. *Forever* here, and throughout Ezekiel, means until the end of the world at the end of the Millennium, not an eternal *forever*. Eternally, all believers will be in the New Jerusalem where there is no temple. The man standing next to Ezekiel told him to

describe the Temple to the people of Israel, that they might be ashamed of their sins, a requirement for repentance.

**Verses 13-27 – Daily Service in the Temple.** The height of the millennial altar (for sacrifices) was 17 ½ feet (5.3 meters) above ground. The altar hearth was 21 feet (6.4 meters) square, and it was reached by a flight of steps facing east. A seven-day ritual will be employed by the priests...of Zadok (cf. 40:46) to set the altar apart to the Lord. This consecration service will be similar in some ways to the services followed by Moses (Exodus 40:10, 29) and Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:8-9) to sanctify their houses of worship to God. After seven days of offering bulls, goats, and rams, the priests will present the people's burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar.

## Applications from Chapters 40-43

1. **The Bible, and everything else, must always be understood literally.** Literal interpretation is simply the author's intended meaning. It includes similes, metaphors, hyperbolas, parables, and many other literary devices. But it never abandons the author's clear intended meaning. It is clear to all serious Bible students that Ezekiel intended a literal fulfillment to all his prophecy concerning the fall of Jerusalem, the exile of its inhabitants, the judgment of its king, and the people's eventual return. So there is no justification for abandoning that consistent literal meaning when Ezekiel tells us about a future Temple which has yet to be built.
2. **The purpose of prophecy is not to predict the future but to confirm the past.** It is not completely clear why God wanted Israel (and us) to know so many details about the future millennial Temple. What is clear is that, when it comes to pass, it will confirm the 100% accuracy of the Word of God, just as the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem did in his day.
3. **Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness** (Hebrew 9:22). There are animal sacrifices, peace offerings, and sin offerings in the Millennium as a constant reminder that a blood sacrifice is not optional. Just as they pointed to the need for a propitiatory sacrifice under the Mosaic Law, and point back at that sacrifice in Christ in our Communion today, so it will remind the Jews in the Kingdom of the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah.
4. **Ezekiel's Temple is a clear indication of dispensationalism.** This is not the tabernacle Moses built in the wilderness. This is not the Temple that Solomon built. This is not the (second) Temple that Zerubbabal rebuilt and Herod added on to. This is not the church age, where our bodies are a temple of God. This is not the New Jerusalem where there is no temple at all. This is a specifically described Temple, which will come to be in the last 1000 years of the earth's history (Revelation 20:11-15).

## Questions from Chapters 40-43

1. The reason we know Ezekiel's Temple was prophetic (not historical or metaphorical) is because
  - A. Ezekiel told us it was prophetic.
  - B. Ezekiel's predictions about the fall of Jerusalem happened literally.
  - C. God told Ezekiel to tell Israel the revelation of this Temple.
2. The reason we have so much detail about Ezekiel's Temple is because
  - A. The sanctuary was the visible symbol of God's presence among His people.
  - B. It would be a visible reminder to the Israelites of their relationship to God.
  - C. We are not told why we have so much detail.

Answers: 1. B. 2. C.

## Chapter 44 — The Service of the Zadok Priests

**Verses 1-3 – The East Gate.** Next, Ezekiel was led out of the inner court to the east gate, which would have opened toward the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives, and he observed that it was shut. Ezekiel had just seen the Lord enter this gate on His return to His temple (43:4). The explanation is that it had to remain shut because *the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it*. Some teach that the “Golden Gate” of Jerusalem, now sealed, is this gate. But the dimensions of the “Golden Gate” are not the same. The Ezekiel gate is still future. One person will be allowed to enter the gate, the prince (46:2), who has already been identified as King David (34:24; 37:24-25). However, he will not pass through the gate. He will only enter it from the inside and eat in the gate, probably meaning he will eat the fellowship offerings which the worshipers will eat after offering them to the Lord (as in Leviticus 7:15-21).

**Verses 4-8 – No Foreigners in the Temple.** Next, Ezekiel reported, *He brought me by way of the north gate [because no one could enter the east gate] to the front [the east side] of the house [the Temple Holy Place and Holy of Holies]; and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD, and I fell on my face*. Then Ezekiel is told to *mark well, see with your eyes and hear with your ears all that I say to you concerning all the [millennial] statutes of the house of the LORD and concerning all its [millennial] laws*. But there is one particular law God is concerned with here. *“Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel, when you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart [unbelievers] and uncircumcised in flesh [Gentiles], to be in My sanctuary to profane it, even My house”* (verse 7). There should be no fellowship between believers and unbelievers. The Apostle John wrote, *This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth* (1 John 1:5-6).

**Verses 9-14 – The Service of the Levites Is Restricted.** Because of their sinful practices before Israel’s fall to Babylon, the Levites’ position will be downgraded in the new Temple from what it was in Solomon’s Temple (1 Chronicles 15:16; 16:4; 23:28-31). They will be allowed to serve as gatekeepers, and to help worshipers sacrifice their animals, but they will not be allowed to serve the Lord *as priests or come near any of His holy things*.

**Verses 15-31 – Regulations for the Zadok Priests who keep charge of My Sanctuary.** Zadok was a Levite priest appointed chief priest over the first Temple during Solomon’s reign, *in order to fulfill the word of the Lord, which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh* (1 Samuel 2:27-36; 1 Kings 2:27). In the Millennial Temple, the Zadok family line will be the true priests. They will have several responsibilities:

1. *They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table* (verse 16).
2. *They shall be clothed with linen garments; not wool so they don’t sweat and they will change garments so that they will not transmit holiness to the people with their garments* (verses 17-19).
3. *They shall not shave their heads, nor let their locks grow long...only trim the hair* (verse 20).
4. *They shall not drink wine when they enter the inner court* (verse 21).
5. *They shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman but shall take virgins from the offspring of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest* (verse 22).
6. *They shall teach and judge the people, keep the law, the feasts, and Sabbaths* (verses 22-27).
7. *They shall have no possession in Israel but shall have the first of all the first fruits of every kind and every contribution* (verses 28-31).

## Chapter 45 — The Land and the Offerings of the Priests

**Verses 1-12 – The Land of the Temple Priests.** Under the Mosaic Law, the tribe of the Levites was set aside to be ministers in the Temple. From the Levites, the family of Aaron and his descendants were appointed as priests. In the Old Testament, rather than having a big area of land, as the other tribes had, the Levites were given cities within the land of the other tribes (Joshua 21:1-42). In the Millennial Kingdom, this will not be the case. They will have land around the Temple.

- There will be a sacred area, about 8.3 miles (13.4 kilometers) long and about 6.6 miles (10.6 kilometers) wide. This rectangle will be divided into two equal portions, each about 8.3 miles (13.4 kilometers) long and 3.3 miles (5.3 kilometers) wide.
- Within this area, there will be the Temple complex Ezekiel described in chapters 40–43.
- The first half will be for houses for the Temple and the Levites who serve in the Temple.
- Land will be added to this rectangle, making it a square, with the city proper, grazing land, and farmland in the additional area.
- This square of land [8.3 miles (13.4 kilometers)] will be located at the present site of Jerusalem.
- The land extending east to the Jordan River and west to the Mediterranean Sea will be given to the prince (i.e., David).

### Verses 13-24 – The Offerings

Verses 13-17—The people will give specific amounts of produce according to each individual's wealth or lack of it. They are each to give a 60<sup>th</sup> of their wheat and barley, 1% of their olive oil, and 1 sheep from every 200. These things will be a tithe or tax collected by David the prince.

Verses 18-25—The feasts include: the New Year feast (verses 18-20), the Passover/Unleavened Bread feast (verses 21-24), the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (verse 25), and another 7-day festival *in the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month*, i.e. at the end of Israel's yearly calendar. The prince makes a sin offering for himself—proving that he is not the Christ. It is not known why Israel's other national feasts (Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement) are omitted.

## Chapter 46 — The East Gate

**Verses 1-15 – The Use of the East Gate.** The east gate from the outer court to the inner court will be closed six days of the week. On the Sabbath Day and on the day of the New Moon it is to be opened. David will stand at the gatepost during these days to offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. There is no entrance to the Temple area on the west, and the east gate will be shut. So access into the Temple area will be from the north and the south. To keep order, whoever enters from the north will go out through the south, and vice versa. If the prince wants to make a freewill offering, the gate facing east is to be opened for him from the inside. After he leaves, the gate is closed again. The morning sacrifices are to be made every day so there is a continual burnt offering.

**Verses 16-18 – Every 50 Years, Property Was to Go Back to Its Original Owners.** *The year of liberty* is apparently like the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10-13), and it will be in force during the Millennium. But if the prince gives part of his estate to one of his sons, it will not be returned in the *year of liberty*. The prince will not be allowed to claim any land outside of his allotted inheritance. In contrast with the evil princes of Ezekiel's day, the prince during the Millennium will not oppress the people or take their property.

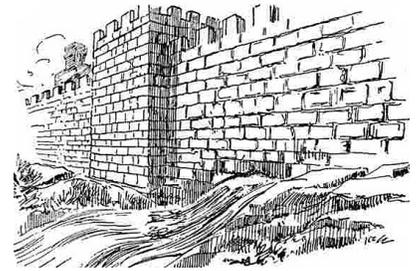
**Verses 19-24 – The Kitchens.** The kitchens for the priests to cook the offerings are to be at the west end of the priests' chambers, adjacent to the Temple proper. The priests will be allowed to eat a por-

tion of the sacrifices brought to the Temple. The kitchens for the people will be in the four corners of the outer court. It seems the priests will cook the peoples' sacrifices. The Temple area will be a place of the fellowship of eating together, as well as worship.

## Chapter 47 — The New Land

### Verses 1-12 – The River from the Temple

Verses 1-6a – Ezekiel was led from the kitchens back to the entrance of the Temple proper. Water was flowing out from the very presence of God, coming out from under the threshold of the Temple. It passed south of the altar, flowing out of the Temple area on the south side of the east gate and into the Kidron Valley (on the east side of the Temple). This water will divide, with half flowing east toward the Dead Sea and half flowing west toward the Mediterranean Sea (Zechariah 14:8).



The angel led Ezekiel along the riverbank. After 1,750 feet (533 meters), the water was ankle deep. After another 1,750 feet (533 meters), the water was knee deep. After another 1,750 feet (533 meters), it was waist deep. Another 1,750 feet (533 meters) and the water had risen, deep enough to swim in, and no one could walk across it. How can it get bigger and deeper as it goes farther from the source? Possibly other sources of water are added from underground springs. Or this may be a miracle, like the unfailling jar of oil in 1 Kings 8:12-16.

Verses 6b-12 – The angel then led Ezekiel back to the banks of the river, where there were trees on both banks. In the east, the river will flow south into the Dead Sea. The first healing effects of the river are seen in the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea (about 29% salt), which is nearly five times saltier than the ocean (about 4% salt), will become a place for fishing. *Fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi [where, in a cave, David cut the hem off Saul's robe] to Eneglaim [location unknown, possibly Qumran] there will be a place for the spreading of nets.* Wherever the river flows, everything will live. The swamps and marshes, however, will be left for salt. The trees on the riverbanks will bear fruit year-round. The fruit will provide food and their leaves will provide healing. God will use these trees to meet people's physical needs.

### Verses 13-23 – The Boundaries of the Land

Verses 13-14 – God promised Abraham and his descendants that He would give them the Land of Palestine (Genesis 13:14-17; 15:17-21). Under the New Covenant, God will restore Israel to her place of blessing in the Land. Israel's borders during the Millennium will be similar to those promised during the time of Moses (Numbers 34:1-12).

Verses 15-17 – The places of the northern boundary are not known with certainty. Some suggest the Tyre area, the Tripoli area, and even north to the Orontes River in modern-day Syria. This would be toward the River Euphrates in the north.

Verse 18 – The eastern border will arch back from around Damascus [including today's Golan] to the Sea of Galilee, to the Jordan River, down the Jordan River to the banks of the Dead Sea. The Transjordan is considered unclean (Joshua 22:19, 25, 27).

Verses 19-20 – The southern border crosses over by Kadesh-Barnea and on to the Mediterranean Sea and up the coast. This would include the Gaza Strip, formerly the territory of the Philistines, an area never attained by Israel in the Old Testament period.

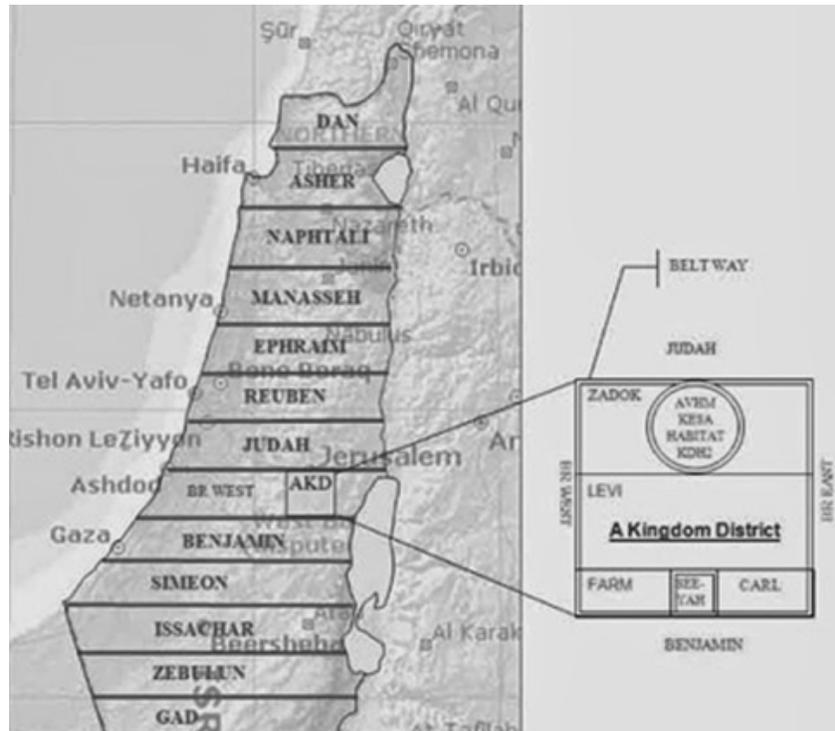
Verses 21-23 – The Land will be distributed to the tribes of Israel, not by lot but by divine decree. This time they are divided equally among the tribes, whereas in the past, the portions depended on the size of the tribe (Numbers 33:54). Foreigners have always been allowed to live in Israel (Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:29), but in the Millennium, they will have many privileges only Israelites had before (Isaiah 56:3-8), i.e., they will be able to have an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.

## Chapter 48 — The New Divisions of the Land

### Verses 1-20 – The Division of the Land by Tribes

Verses 1-7 – Seven tribes will have land north of Jerusalem (Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Judah).

Verses 8-22 – The central band of land by Jerusalem belongs to the Prince David. Jerusalem is laid out as a square, approximately 2.2 square miles (3.5 square kilometers). Surrounding Jerusalem will be a band 437.5 feet (133.3 meters) wide, which will be pastureland for flocks and herds of people living in the city. On either side of the city proper will be two portions of land 3.3 miles (5.3 kilometers) long, and 1.65 miles (2.65 kilometers) wide, which is farmland, cultivated to supply food for the workers in the city. The city is open to members of every tribe. It's a kind of microcosm of the whole nation of tribes.



Verses 23-29 – South of Jerusalem will be land for the remaining five tribes of Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad. These locations of the 12 tribes are different than their locations during Joshua's time to the captivity (Joshua 13-19).

### Verses 30-35 – The Gates of the City

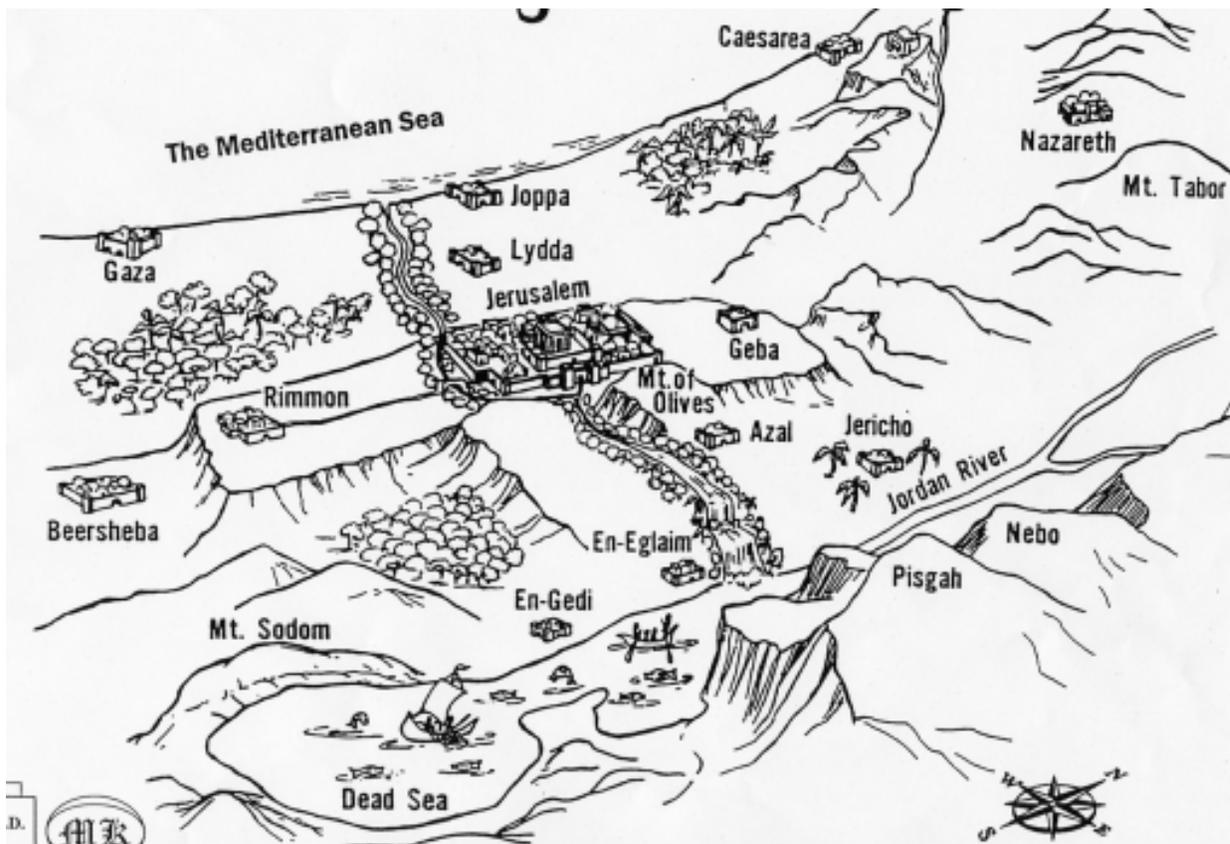
Verses 30-31 – Jerusalem will have 12 gates, 3 on each side. All 12 tribes are represented in these gates. The three on the north (closest to the Temple) will be named for Reuben (the firstborn of Jacob's 12 sons), Judah (the royal tribe), and Levi (the tribe of the priesthood). All three were children of Jacob's first wife Leah (Genesis 29:31-35).

Verse 32 – The east side gates are named for Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan. Because Levi was given a gate, Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh were combined as the one tribe of Joseph (see Genesis 48:1). Benjamin and Joseph were both sons of Rachel (Genesis 30:22-24; 35:16-18), and Dan was the first son of Rachel's servant Bilhah, who became Jacob's concubine (Genesis 30:4-6).

Verse 33 – The gates on the south are named after Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun. These three were also born to Leah (Genesis 29:33; 30:17-20).

Verse 34 – The gates on the west side were named for Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, sons of Jacob's concubines. Gad and Asher were born to Zilpah and Naphtali was born to Bilhah.

Verse 35— The most amazing thing of the new city will be the presence of the LORD. God's glory had departed from the city before its judgment (chapters 10–11), and His return will be a sign of Jerusalem's blessing. So the city will be given a new name: THE LORD IS THERE. No longer will God's people be worshipping lifeless idols and doing horrible acts, like sacrificing their children. The Millennium will be characterized as the LORD's presence in the midst of Israel.



## Applications from Chapters 44–48

- 1. We should not fellowship with unbelievers.** God said, *Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel, when you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to profane it, even My house* (44:7). Of course, foreigners here are Gentiles and our local churches are not the Temple of God today (our bodies are—1 Corinthians 12:13). But by way of application, this would prohibit the practice of bringing unbelieving “seekers” into our “churches” as part of our regular fellowship. It would also prohibit our own close fellowship with unbelievers [*Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?* (2 Corinthians 6:14)].
- 2. God remembers sin.** God said, *the Levites who went far from Me when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear the punishment for their iniquity* (44:10). God remembered the sins of the Levites for at least three thousand years and judged them accordingly. It is like the sins of believers (1 Corinthians 3:1-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). They were there, but they were restricted because of their sin.
- 3. Never confuse the millennial earth with the New Heaven and New Earth.** The millennial earth will be a reshaped, renewed version of this present earth, beginning with Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. But this is not an eternal dwelling place for the saints. The millennial earth will be destroyed after a thousand years (Revelation 20) when *the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up* (2 Peter 3:10).
- 4. Salvation is an unconditional covenant, even though our eternal rewards are conditional.** It is interesting that the tribe of Dan is excluded from the 144,000, sealed by God during the tribulation period (Revelation 7 and 14), yet they are given a land here. It seems that God punished them for their sin, yet He honored His unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

## Questions from Chapters 44–48

1. The east gate of the Millennial Temple was unique in that
  - A. It will be closed during the millennial period.
  - B. No one could enter it, whether it was open or not.
  - C. It was only to be used for eating sacrifices.
2. The duties of the priests and the Levites were
  - A. The same as under the Mosaic Law
  - B. Similar to but distinct from the Mosaic Law
  - C. Different from the Mosaic Law
3. The territorial assignments of the tribes of Israel were
  - A. The same as under the Mosaic Law
  - B. Similar to but distinct from the Mosaic Law
  - C. Different from the Mosaic Law
4. The tribe of Dan was
  - A. Omitted from the 144,000 during the tribulation but included in the millennium
  - B. Given a millennial territory but not named on the gates of the city
  - C. Named on the gates of the city but excluded as a territory in the millennium

Answers: 1.A; 2.B; 3.C; 4.A.