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# Ezekiel Bible Study



Dr. Rich Schnieders

Friendship Grace Brethren Church

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# Ezekiel

We begin a verse by verse study through the Prophetic book of Ezekiel. The book of Ezekiel is perhaps one of the most perplexing of the prophetic book in the Bible. The author's vivid verbal pictures range from dry bones in the desert coming to life to giant wheels in the sky. Bible students often shy away from spending much time in a study of the book. In skipping the book, the Bible student skips a great source of historical information and fills in eschatology.

## Background

The author of the book of Ezekiel was Ezekiel, the son of Buzi.

*Ezekiel 1:1–3 (ESV)*

*1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.*

Ezekiel was one of the thousands of Jewish citizens of Jerusalem taken into captivity by Babylon during the deportations of 598/597BCE. King Nebuchadnezzar had begun to lay siege on Judah and Jerusalem in 605BCE. By the time Nebuchadnezzar had finished his conquest of Jerusalem in 586BCE, the temple had laid in ruins, Jerusalem was destroyed, and many young men and women had been taken back to Babylon to be trained and serve in government there. Ezekiel and Daniel are just a couple of the young men taken to Babylon. Daniel was taken in the first wave, probably in 605BCE, while Ezekiel went in a later wave.

When Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem in 605BCE, he set up a vassal government with Eliakim, son of Josiah, as King. Babylon entirely controlled Eliakim, but the people still believed that Jerusalem would never be taken. They had a mistaken belief that God would never remove Israel from the land; after all, they were God's chosen. They failed to see that they had frequently and consistently violated the covenant between themselves and God. The ten northern tribes known as Israel had been taken into captivity by Assyria in 722BCE and basically vanished from the scene. Just as Babylon would do to the southern tribes, Assyria took the brightest and best back to Assyria and transported many other people back to Israel. This had weakened the people conquered and prevented them from growing strong and fighting for their freedom. Babylon did the same thing to Judah and the two tribes in the south. It is in this environment that Ezekiel begins his prophetic ministry.

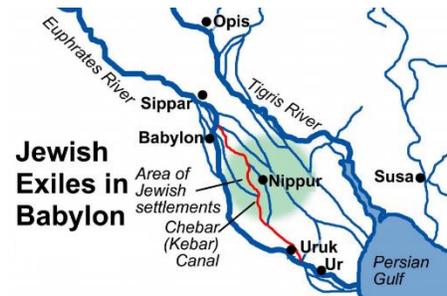
## Ezekiel, the Man

We know that Ezekiel was a priest and was the son of a priest.

*Ezekiel 1:3 (ESV)*

*3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.*

He was called into ministry while already a captive in Babylon. He was living along the Chebar Canal in Babylon. There was a sizable settlement of Jewish captives along the canal here. The name of this settlement was called Tel Aviv. Not the same as the modern Tel Aviv, which is in Israel on the Mediterranean coast, but in Babylon. Psalm 137 speaks of the plight of the Jewish captives here along the canal.



Ezekiel was from the priestly line and was called by God to be a Prophet to Israel, even in captivity. His name means

**God Strengthens**. He was born in 622BCE. Ezekiel was taken captive in the second wave of captives in 597BCE. He was an eyewitness to the events and tragedies of the last days of Judah. Even though he was taken captive in 597BCE, Ezekiel did not receive his call to prophetic ministry until 593BCE. He remained active in prophetic ministry until at least 573BCE.

*Ezekiel 40:1 (ESV)*

*40 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me to the city.*

Past this point in time, we know nothing of what happened toward the end of his ministry. We do not know where, when, or how Ezekiel died. Because of his return to Jerusalem in a vision as stated in 40:1–2, some have held that he actually visited the city. Yet, there is no indication he ever physically returned to the city after his capture.<sup>1</sup> We have no significant information on his personal life. We do know he was married:

*Ezekiel 24:18 (ESV)*

*18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening **my wife died**. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.*

We know that at the time Ezekiel was called to the prophetic mission, he sat stunned for days.

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<sup>1</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, [Ezekiel](#), vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 28.

*Ezekiel 3:15 (ESV)*

*15 And I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.*

*Ezekiel was told that he was to be sent to the people of Israel and his message would contain warnings and woes, but he would find them sweet (3:1–4). The whole experience changed Ezekiel’s life. He would be empowered to deliver his message, despite his people’s resistance to it. He needed such strengthening, for his task would not be easy.<sup>2</sup>*

Ezekiel did not regard his call as a way to reach fame and fortune or have any long-term benefits. He saw in his visions the majesty of God, and in seeing God’s majesty, he realized it proper to follow His direction.

Warren Wiersbe, the former Pastor of Moody Bible Church and author of many books, writes in his book “Be Reverent” which is his commentary of the book of Ezekiel, Like Jeremiah (1:2), Zechariah (1:1), and John the Baptist (Luke 1:5ff), Ezekiel (“God strengthens”) was called by God from being a priest to serving as a prophet.<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say:

*It would have been much easier for Ezekiel to remain a priest, for priests were highly esteemed by the Jews, and a priest could read the Law and learn everything he needed to know to do his work. Prophets were usually despised and persecuted. They received their messages and orders from the Lord as the occasion demanded and could never be sure what would happen next. It was dangerous to be a prophet. Most people resent being told about their sins and prefer to hear messages of cheer, not declarations of judgment.<sup>4</sup>*

The point Wiersbe is making is that God took a man who lived a life of relative respect and an elevated position to a position that carried very little respect and often resulted in persecution and harassment. Sometimes God directs us to deal with a more difficult life so that His plan comes about, and we are where He wants us to be.

## Timeline of Ezekiel’s Ministry

- 605 B.C.      Nebuchadnezzar takes the temple treasures to Babylon; Daniel was taken captive
- 597 B.C.      Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon at age twenty-five
- 593 B.C.      Ezekiel called to ministry at age 30 (Ezek. 1–3)

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<sup>2</sup> L. John McGregor, “Ezekiel,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 719.

<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Reverent*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor/Cook Communications, 2000), 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

- 592 B.C. Ezekiel's vision of the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 8:1ff)
- 591 B.C. Ezekiel interprets Israel's history (Ezek. 20:1ff)
- 588 B.C. Siege of Jerusalem begins (Ezek. 24:1ff)
- 587–585 B.C. Ezekiel's messages against Egypt (Ezek. 29–32) and Tyre (Ezek. 26:1ff)
- 586 B.C. Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonian army
- 585 B.C. The news comes to Ezekiel of Jerusalem's destruction (Ezek. 33:21–22)
- 573 B.C. Visions of Israel's glorious future (Ezek. 40–48)
- 571 B.C. Ezekiel's message that Babylon will defeat Egypt (Ezek. 29:17–21)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 10.

## Dated Prophecies in Ezekiel<sup>6</sup>

PASSAGE	EVENT	EZEKIEL'S DATE			JULIAN CALENDAR
		MONTH	DAY	YEAR	
1:1-2	Ezekiel's call to be a prophet	4	5	30[5]*	☾ July 593 B.C.
3:16	Ezekiel's commission in exile	4	12	30[5]*	☾ Aug. 593 B.C.
8:1	Visions of judgment for polluting the temple	6	5	6	☾ Sept. 592 B.C.
20:1	Inquiry of the elders	5	10	7	☾ Aug. 591 B.C.
24:1	Siege of Jerusalem begins	10	10	9	☾ Jan. 588 B.C.
26:1	Prophecy of Tyre's destruction	?	1	11	☾ Feb. or Mar.(?) 586 B.C.
29:1	Prophecy of Egypt's destruction	10	12	10	☾ Jan. 587 B.C.
29:17	Prophecy of Tyre and Egypt reinforced	1	1	27	☾ Apr. 571 B.C.
30:20	Prophecy of Pharaoh's destruction	1	7	11	☾ Apr. 587 B.C.
31:1	Prophecy of Pharaoh's destruction	3	1	11	☾ June 587 B.C.
32:1	Lamentation of Pharaoh	12	1	12	☾ Mar. 585 B.C.
32:17	Pharaoh in Sheol	12	15	12	☾ Apr.(?) 585 B.C.
33:21	Lament over fall of Jerusalem	10	5	12	☾ Jan. 585 B.C.
40:1	Vision of the new temple/Jerusalem	1	10	25	☾ Apr. or ☾ Oct. 573 B.C.

## Theme of Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel can be neatly divided into two main divisions. Division 1 Ezekiel 1-32 announces judgment upon Israel and the surrounding pagan nations. Ezekiel 33-48 focuses on the salvation of Israel. Each of these two divisions can be further divided into two sections. Division 1 breaks down to prophecies of the judgment of Israel Ezekiel 3-24, and the judgment of pagan nations in Ezekiel 25-32. Division 2 is broken down into predictions of the salvation and restoration of Israel, along with the destruction of the world powers Ezekiel 33-39. The second section of Division two is broken down into the prophetic picture of the kingdom we most often refer to as the Messianic Kingdom in Ezekiel 40-48.

<sup>6</sup> Cooper, Lamar Eugene. *Ezekiel*. Vol. 17. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

Ezekiel uses a great deal of imagery and allegorical descriptions in his writings, painting fanciful and imaginative word pictures of his visions. Ezekiel uses more imagery than any other prophetic author of scripture, even more than John in Revelation. These fanciful images have caused some scholars not to take the book of Ezekiel very seriously and not use it to aid in the building of proper eschatology.

The book of Ezekiel has a primarily chronological arrangement. This makes the book of Ezekiel the only major prophetic book of scripture with such an arrangement. In addition to its chronological arrangement, Ezekiel's book also has a structural order and harmony.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that many chapters in Ezekiel begin with dating information, give Ezekiel great chronological precision. Verses 1:1-2, 8:1, 20:1, 24:1, 26:1, 29:1, 30:20, 31:1, 32:1, 32:17, and 40:1 all provide dating information that provide a great reference.

*Regarding Ezekiel's ability to communicate God's Word across the many miles between Babylonia and Judea, the Daily Notes of the Scripture Union say:*

*One of the problems of this book is Ezekiel's ministry to those in far off Jerusalem, while he was himself an exile in Babylonia. It must be assumed that those who had been deported were free to maintain communications with the homeland; with the intervening territory unified and pacified by Babylon, this was no doubt more practicable than it had been in earlier times. It was simpler for a messenger to describe in his own words Ezekiel's symbolic act than to bear a verbal message which might have faded in his memory, or a written message which might have invited the attention of the Babylonian authorities.<sup>8</sup>*

The KJV Bible Commentary<sup>9</sup> states there are five recurrent themes in the book of Ezekiel. The first recurring theme relates to the character of God. The second recurring theme is the sinfulness of Israel. The third theme is the punishment due to Israel's sinfulness. The fourth theme is that of individual responsibility. The fifth and final recurring theme is the promise of future restoration.

Much of the book of Ezekiel relates God's direct communication with Ezekiel. These sections can be seen beginning with "and He said to me" from Ezekiel 2:1, or something like it.

The phrase "Son of Man" appears over 90 times in Ezekiel. On each of these occasions, Ezekiel is the subject. As used in Ezekiel, the title "son of man" identifies Ezekiel with the people he was sent to. In that same vein that "Son of Man" is used in referring to Jesus in the New Testament.

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<sup>7</sup> Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1226.

<sup>8</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1037.

<sup>9</sup> Hindson, Edward E., and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds. *KJV Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994.

## Outline of Ezekiel

During our study of the book of Ezekiel, we will be following the outline provided by Dr. Marl F. Rooker in the Holman Old Testament Commentary.

- I. God Reveals Himself to Ezekiel 1:1-28
  1. The Heavenly Vision 1:1-3
  2. The Heavenly Creatures 1:4-14
  3. The Heavenly Wheels 1:15-21
  4. The Heavenly Throne 1:22-28
- II. The Call of God 2:1-3:15
  1. Power for Ministry 2:1-2
  2. Nature of Ministry 2:3-7
  3. Focus of Ministry 2:8-3:3
  4. Response to Ministry 3:4-11
  5. Waiting for Ministry 3:12-15
- III. Dedication to Ministry 3:16 -5:17
  1. The Nature of Ezekiel's Preaching 3:16-21
  2. The Restriction of the Prophet 3:22-27
  3. The Siege of Jerusalem 4:1-3
  4. Siege Results from Iniquity 4:4-8
  5. Diet for Siege and Exile 4:9-17
  6. Judgements on Inhabitants of Jerusalem 5:1-12
  7. The Nations Will Be Appalled at Israel 5:13-17
- IV. No Place for Pride 6:1-7:27
  1. Idolatry on the Mountains 6:1-7
  2. A Remnant Will Remain 6:8-10
  3. Abomination in Israel 6:11-14
  4. Announcement of the End 7:1-9
  5. Day of the Lord 7:10-27

- V. God Should be First 8:1-11:25
  - 1. Idolatry in the temple 8:1-18
  - 2. Judgment Announced for the Abominations in the Temple 9:1-11
  - 3. The Lord Leaves the Temple 10:1-11:25
- VI. False Prophets 12:1-15:8
  - 1. Signs for the Coming Exile 12:1-20
  - 2. Two False Proverbs 12:21-28
  - 3. Condemnation of False Prophets 13:1-23
  - 4. Consulting a Prophet 14:1-11
  - 5. Four Judgments Against Jerusalem 14:12-23
  - 6. Jerusalem is a Useless Vine 15:1-8
- VII. The Peril of Forgetting God 16:1-17:24
  - 1. The Insatiable Adulteress 16:1-43
  - 2. God's People Are No Different Than The World 16:44-59
  - 3. Unconditional Grace 16:6-63
  - 4. Judah's Future 17:1-21
  - 5. The New Eden 17:22-24
- VIII. All Must Repent 18:1-20:44
  - 1. Individual Accountability 18:1-32
  - 2. Royal Accountability 19:1-14
  - 3. National Accountability 20:1-31
  - 4. Transformation of Israel 20:32-44
- IX. The Judgement of God 20:45-24:27
  - 1. The Fire and the Sword Will Devastate 20:45-21:31
  - 2. Jerusalem's Sin is Comprehensive 22:1-23:49
  - 3. Sure is the Judgment 24:1-27
- X. Every Knee Shall Bow 25:1-32:32
  - 1. Judgment on Conspiring Rebels 25:1-17

2. Judgment on Commercial Rival 26:1-28:26
  3. Judgment on Consummate Ruler 29:1-32:32
- XI. The Lord is My Shepherd 33:1-34:31
1. Role of a Watchman 33:1-20
  2. Ruin of the Land 33:21-33
  3. Role of Shepherd 34:1-31
- XII. Hallowed Be Thy Name 35:1-36:38
1. Mountain of Seir 35:1-15
  2. Mountains of Israel 36:1-15
  3. Motivation for Restoration 36:16-38
- XIII. One Nation Under God 37:1-39:29
1. God's People Revived 37:1-14
  2. God's People United 37:15-28
  3. God's People Protected 38:1-39:29
- XIV. And the Word Became Flesh Ezekiel 40:1-46:24
1. Temple Construction 40:1-42:20
  2. Temple Presence 43:1-12
  3. Temple Worship 43:13-27
  4. Temple Leadership 44:1-45:12
  5. Temple Offerings 45:13-46:24
- XV. And Dwelt Among Us 47:1-48:35
1. Life-Giving River 47:1-12
  2. Land Allotments 47:13-48:29
  3. The Lord's Presence 48:30-35<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Rooker, Max Anders, and Mark Rooker, *Ezekiel*, Holman Old Testament commentary General ed.: Max Anders; 17 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2005).

## Commentary

### God Reveals Himself to Ezekiel 1:1-28

Israel, the northern tribes, were taken captive by Assyria in 722 BCE, leaving Judah in the south alone. From 722 BCE until 605 BCE and Babylons beginning to carry away Judeans, the southern nation of Judah faced considerable difficulty.

*R.C. Sproul and Robert Wolgemuth have written:*

*The time between the fall of Israel and the demise of Judah was one of unmatched turbulence in the Southern Kingdom. It was during this time that Hezekiah reigned as king. He was a good king, a godly king. It was his desire to restore Judah to obedience and proper worship. But Hezekiah's reign and God's blessing on Jerusalem lasted only a few years. His son, Manasseh, a very wicked king, replaced the righteous and God-fearing Hezekiah. Not only did Manasseh establish pagan images in the hilltop sites—high places—around Jerusalem, he also brought a pagan image into the very temple of God. Incredibly, and by God's grace, Manasseh repented as an old man. His successor, unfortunately, was his nefarious son, who had learnt by his father's early example. Until Josiah came to power, Judah found itself in an ongoing and terrible descent.*

*Josiah's reforms held back the judgement of God upon Judah for a while but inevitably the Babylonians invaded and the Babylonian captivity began.<sup>11</sup>*

That is the scene into which Ezekiel is thrust and which sets the stage for the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel was taken captive in the second wave of captives and was called to be a prophet while already in captivity. Ezekiel was a priest but without a temple to serve in.

### The Heavenly Vision 1:1-3

*Ezekiel 1:1–3 (ESV)*

*1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.*

We see in these verses some detailed information. First, we have specific dating information: “The 13<sup>th</sup> year, the 4<sup>th</sup> month, and the 5<sup>th</sup> day”, as well as “the 30<sup>th</sup> year.” The 30<sup>th</sup> year would indicate that Ezekiel is 30 years old when he begins to write the book of Ezekiel. The age of 30

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Jeffery, *Opening up Ezekiel's Visions*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 13–14.

was the age that a priest would begin to serve in his priestly duties. Without a temple to serve in, perhaps God called Ezekiel to serve in this new role as Prophet.

Some scholars argue that the 30<sup>th</sup> year is not Ezekiel's age but the 30<sup>th</sup> year of Nabopolassar's reign. Nabopolassar was the father of Nebuchadnezzar. Nabopolassar was the ruler who brought the Babylonians to power at the fall of Ashurbanipal of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Nabopolassar filled the vacuum created by the death of Ashurbanipal and quickly moved to take over Assyria. It was common in the Chaldean and Babylonian records to begin counting years at the beginning of a new ruler's reign. Some scholars interpret this as the 30<sup>th</sup> year in the current jubilee sequence or the 30<sup>th</sup> year of other notable figures. The fourth month would be mid-June to mid-July.

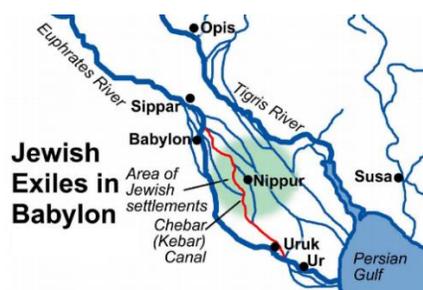
Ezekiel also documents the date through other means. He states it was the 5<sup>th</sup> year since King Jehoiachin was taken into captivity. Within months of becoming the Judean King, King Nerbudchadnessar took Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin surrendered. He was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon. Five years later brings us to 593 BCE. So when we put the data together, we discover this is early summer, June/July 593 BCE.

Ezekiel states, "the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, the priest, the son of Buzi..." Ezekiel was not giving his impression or thoughts; he gave the words he received directly from God.

**Question: What do we call what Ezekiel describes as "the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel, the priest?"**

**Answer: Inspiration**

Ezekiel also tells us that he was in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar Canal. The name



"Chaldean" comes from the early tribe that inhabited this region after the flood of Noah and the population explosion leading up to the tower of Babel. It is the area of Babylon and modern Iraq. The Chebar canal or river is also known in archeological circles as "nar-kabaru." It is a river or man-made canal that was used to bring water to the city of Babylon. It is often referred to as Shaten-Nil in recent archeological articles.

Psalm 137, dating to this same period, speaks of the depression that the captive Jews living in this area were going through.

## The Heavenly Creatures 1:4-14

*Ezekiel 1:4 (ESV)*

*4 As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal.*

It does not take long in Ezekiel's writing before he utilizes colorful and fanciful language to describe what he is experiencing. He sets the stage in verses 1-3, and here in verse 4, Ezekiel

describes a wind coming from the north, along with a great bright shining cloud, with fire flashing out of it with some sort of gleaming metal in the middle. Except for the gleaming metal in the middle, the description sounds like a south Florida thunderstorm in August.

The word translated as gleaming metal is the Hebrew word הַחֹשֶׁמֶל (haḥašmal) which is defined as a shining substance with amber or electrum color. The word also denotes a form of brass. This word is used only by Ezekiel in the Old Testament. Ezekiel also uses the same word in

*Ezekiel 1:27 (ESV)*

*27 And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.*

and

*Ezekiel 8:2 (ESV)*

*2 Then I looked, and behold, a form that had the appearance of a man. Below what appeared to be his waist was fire, and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal.*

In both verses, the word is used to describe God's majesty and glory. It seems that Ezekiel is describing a Theophany or Christoffany.

*Ezekiel 1:5–14 (ESV)*

*5 And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, 6 but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. 7 Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. 8 Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: 9 their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. 10 As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. 11 Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above. Each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. 12 And each went straight forward. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches moving to and fro among the living creatures. And the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14 And the living creatures darted to and fro, like the appearance of a flash of lightning.*

In the storm with a shining and gleaming object in the middle is described by Ezekiel with what appeared as four living creatures in the middle. In chapter 10 of Ezekiel, we discover that these four living creatures are cherubim. Cherubim are in a class of winged angels whose primary function is to be guardians.

*Genesis 3:24 (ESV)*

*24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Or Attendants, as we will see in Ezekiel 10. The author of the book of Hebrews provides the only reference to cherubim in the New Testament as he describes the contents of the Holy of Holies.

*Hebrews 9:5 (ESV)*

*5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

## The Heavenly Wheels 1:15-21

We learn later in Ezekiel the cherubim have direct access to God:

*Ezekiel 28:14–16 (ESV)*

*14 You were an anointed guardian cherub.*

*I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;  
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.*

*15 You were blameless in your ways  
from the day you were created,  
till unrighteousness was found in you.*

*16 In the abundance of your trade  
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;  
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,  
and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub,  
from the midst of the stones of fire.*

Of course, as we will discover when we work through this passage, this passage references Lucifer, also called Satan.

Ezekiel describes the four living creatures as having the appearance of humans but with four faces and four wings. They apparently had straight legs, but rather than human feet, they had the feet of calves. They sparkled like bronze. Ezekiel gives a more detailed description of the faces: a human face, a lion face, an ox face, and an eagle face. The description of the four faces is interesting. Warren Wiersbe states: “*Man is the highest of God’s creatures, being made in the image of God. The lion is the greatest of the untamed beasts of the forest, while the ox is the strongest of the domesticated beasts of the field. The eagle is the greatest of the birds and is even a picture of God.*”<sup>12</sup> Wiersbe also states:



*The presence of the cherubim before the throne of God is assurance that God remembers His promise and cares for His creatures. But it also reminds us that all of creation is used by the Lord to bless or to chasten His people. In this vision, they are a part of God’s judgment on His sinful people.*<sup>13</sup>

Under the four wings, Ezekiel describes the creatures had human hands.



The four creatures flew in formation with their wingtip touching each other, flying in a straight line. Two wings covered the bodies of the creatures, and two wings were used to fly.

Ezekiel describes that the creature flew straight, wherever the spirit would go. They could fly in any direction without turning. This seems to indicate that they always faced one direction but could go any direction without turning. They were led by the spirit. Spirit here is the Hebrew word הָרִיחַ (hārûah) which is translated as spirit, breath, or wind. The immediate context does not make the decision on how to interpret this word as wind or spirit very simple. You have to go down to verses 20 and 21 to help define the word.

*Ezekiel 1:20–21 (ESV)*

*20 Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.*

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<sup>12</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Reverent*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor/Cook Communications, 2000), 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

These verses seem to give proper direction that הָרִיחַ (hārûah) in verse 12 is referring to the Spirit of God, or as we will see in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit. These creatures were darting around the sky like flashes of lightning at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel also describes the four creatures as having an appearance of burning coals of fire, like torches moving in the night. Not only hot burning coals and torches but with lightning coming from the center.

The question the Bible student must answer here is, “what did Ezekiel see?” was this simply a thunderstorm, or did God roll back the curtain to the spiritual world, providing a glimpse to Ezekiel of something or creatures we do not usually see. Some more liberal scholars argue that Ezekiel saw a thunderstorm but imagined all the rest. If we are to believe Scripture at all, we have to believe that Ezekiel saw something fantastic, difficult to describe, which overwhelmed his senses. I think it is clear that God provided Ezekiel a glimpse into the spiritual world, and Ezekiel recorded it for us to read thousands of years later.

*Ezekiel 1:15 (ESV)*

*15 Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.*

Ezekiel also saw on the ground four wheels, one for each of the four creatures.

*Ezekiel 1:16–18 (ESV)*

*16 As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl. And the four had the same likeness, their appearance and construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel. 17 When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went. 18 And their rims were tall and awesome, and the rims of all four were full of eyes all around.*

Ezekiel describes these wheels as shining bright like beryl. Beryl is a mineral



composed of beryllium aluminum. It comes in multiple colors and is the compound of emeralds and morganite. As used in scripture, it is a yellowish color and most often refers to a yellow gemstone. These wheels are further described as wheels within wheels, and the rims were full of eyes.



*Ezekiel 1:19–21 (ESV)*

*19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. 20 Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.*

These wheels stayed in close contact with the creatures, moving in tandem with the creatures. Ezekiel also describes the Spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. This description seems to indicate that these wheels were like an extension of the cherubim

## The Heavenly Throne 1:22-28

*Ezekiel 1:22 (ESV)*

*22 Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal, spread out above their heads.*

Ezekiel's mind had to be churning as he gazed into the spiritual world. He saw the four creatures on wheels darting about. He observed something above the wings of the cherubim that he could only describe as an expanse. Expanse is the Hebrew word רָקִיעַ (rāqîa') which is the same words used in Genesis 1 to describe the canopy of water that surrounded the earth before the flood. The expanse here in Ezekiel is shining and sparkling like "awe-inspiring crystal." רָקִיעַ (rāqîa') has the original meaning of something beaten out or spread out like a bowl beaten out of metal. The appearance of the expanse reminded Ezekiel of sparkling ice crystals, refracting the light of the sun.

*Ezekiel 1:23–24 (ESV)*

*23 And under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another. And each creature had two wings covering its body. 24 And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army. When they stood still, they let down their wings.*

The sound of the wings of the four creatures was like the sound of rushing water—the thundering sound of massive waterfalls. Ezekiel also describes the sound of God's thunderous voice, which many scholars take to mean a loud thunderstorm. So that we get the right idea, Ezekiel also describes the sound of the wings as the sound of a mighty army.

*Ezekiel 1:25 (ESV)*

*25 And there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads. When they stood still, they let down their wings.*

From above the expanse came a voice. When the cherubim stood still, their wings dropped down to their side. The context would indicate this resulted in quiet, and then Ezekiel heard the voice.

*Ezekiel 1:26–28 (ESV)*

*26 And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. 27 And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of*

*fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. 28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around.*

*Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.*

Then Ezekiel saw above the expanse, over the heads the likeness of a throne. This throne had the appearance of sapphire. The throne was blue or, as Warren Wiersbe describes it, azure blue.<sup>14</sup> Seated on the throne was a human appearance. There was a “gleaming metal” from what Ezekiel saw as the waist of the human appearance on the throne. This gleaming metal is the same word, הַשְּׁמַל (haḥšmal) used to describe an amber shining bright light coming from the center of the approaching thunderstorm. Ezekiel also describes a rainbow surrounding the appearance.

Wiersbe states:

*The wheels depicted God’s omnipresence and omniscience, and the throne speaks of God’s omnipotent authority. The throne was azure blue, with flashes of fire within it (holiness; see Rev. 15:2) and a rainbow around it (covenant grace). Noah saw the rainbow after the storm (Gen. 9:13–16), the Apostle John saw it before the storm (Rev. 4:3), but Ezekiel saw it over the storm and in control of the storm. In His wrath, God remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2). Ezekiel realized that he was beholding the glory of the Lord (Ezek. 1:28), and he fell on his face in awesome fear (3:23; Dan. 8:17; 10:9, 15, 17; Rev. 1:17). The “man” he saw upon the throne was probably a preincarnate appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See Ezek. 8:2 and 40:3.)<sup>15</sup>*

**Question: What do you think Ezekiel saw in this vision of 4 creatures, wheels, with a throne above?**

**Answer: It appears that God peeled back the curtain to the spiritual world to allow him to see the throne of God, or as some commentators describe it as the throne-chariot of God, with a pre-incarnate Jesus sitting on the throne.**

We do not learn the theological importance of this vision until chapters 8-11. However, we should recognize that Ezekiel has seen God’s throne coming to him in Babylon. We will have to wait until later in the book to know if this appearance by God is a positive for the exiles or a negative.

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<sup>14</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Reverent*. “Be” Commentary Series. Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor/Cook Communications, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 15–16.

## The Call of God 2:1-3:15

We move from the very compelling vision of God in Chapter 1, and we now move on to God's call of Ezekiel to be His prophet.

*Ezekiel 2:1 (ESV)*

*2 And he said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you."*

Chapter One ends with Ezekiel falling on his face before God he saw in the strange vision. Ezekiel then heard the voice of God speaking to him. Chapter 2, verse 1, begins the call of Ezekiel to be a prophet of God. We also have here in verse 1 the first of more than 90 times that Ezekiel is called the "Son of Man." It is essential for the Bible Student not to equate "Son of Man" as used in Ezekiel with how the title was used in reference to Jesus. In Ezekiel, "Son of Man" refers to the humanity of Ezekiel. The phrase "son of man" is also used in Poetic parallelism throughout the Old Testament. It is always used in the second half of the parallelism, such as in:

*Numbers 23:19 (ESV)*

*19 God is not man, that he should lie,  
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.*

*Has he said, and will he not do it?*

*Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

or

*Job 16:21 (ESV)*

*21 that he would argue the case of a man with God,  
as a son of man does with his neighbor.*

or

*Psalms 8:4 (ESV)*

*4 what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?*

The apocryphal book of the period began to use the title "Son of Man" in a veiled reference to the coming Messiah. The Prophetic book of Daniel then uses the phrase clearly in reference to the Messiah.

*Daniel 7:13–14 (ESV)*

*The **Son of Man** Is Given Dominion*

*13 “I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.*

*14 And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.*

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Daniel was a popular book during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century among the Jews in Israel.<sup>16</sup> It is believed that Daniel then becomes the source for the application of “Son of Man” to Jesus, expressing the messianic reality of Jesus. Jesus Himself uses the phrase “Son of Man” for Himself on several occasions, such as:

*Matthew 11:18–19 (ESV)*

*18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’  
19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A  
glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is  
justified by her deeds.”*

As Ezekiel is called the son of man by God, he begins the process of the development of the title. So, in the progression from Ezekiel, where “son of man” emphasizes his humanity, to Daniel, where it speaks of the Messiah or at least a relationship to the Messiah until Jesus Himself applies the title to Himself as the Divine Messiah. Without the use of the phrase in the Old Testament, there could be no sense made for its use by Jesus.

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<sup>16</sup> Josephus, Flavius, and William Whiston. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987.

*Ezekiel 2:2 (ESV)*

*2 And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.*

As God began to speak with Ezekiel, the Holy Spirit entered Ezekiel and caused him to stand before God. Ezekiel was entirely overwhelmed by the vision he had seen in chapter 1. He was lying on the ground from the weight of the presence of the glory of God. The lesson for us to learn here is that God's glory carries tremendous weight, and as mortal men, we cannot withstand its pressure in both a physical and spiritual sense. We cannot imagine the weight of the glory of God.

As Ezekiel lay on the ground due to the pressure of the glory of God, the Holy Spirit, or as Ezekiel understood it, the Spirit of God, entered into him and set him on his feet. Pressed down by the glory of God, it took the Spirit of God to get Ezekiel on his feet. I find this verse fascinating in that it is the perfect example of the power of the Word of God in tandem with the Holy Spirit. The Word of God requires the Spirit of God to have an effect on people. Here Ezekiel here, the Word of God, is combined with the Spirit of God, and Ezekiel is raised to his feet.

### Nature of Ministry 2:3-7

*Ezekiel 2:3 (ESV)*

*3 And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.*

God again addresses Ezekiel as the "Son of Man" and tells him that he is being sent to the People of Israel. God then describes Israel as the people who rebelled against God. God then says that the current people of Israel and their ancestors have transgressed against God.

God was commissioning Ezekiel to be His representative to a people that had rebelled from God. But not just the people that Ezekiel would deal with; the people have a history of rebelling from God. So disgusted with the people of Israel, God uses a word typically reserved for the Gentiles, the unclean. God says He is sending Ezekiel to a "Nations" of Rebels. The word nations here is the Hebrew word גוֹי (gôy) which is used of Gentiles. It is very rarely used to speak of Israel. Since Israel had a history of following foreign gods, God said that since the Israelites were following foreign gods and acting like foreign heathen people, they were foreign heathen people. They had clearly violated their covenant relationship with God. God was sending Ezekiel to be His representative to these people.

So, imagine the weight of the glory of God pressing you to the ground only to be stood up by the Holy Spirit to hear God tell you that you were going to be His representative to a people that had violated their covenant with God. The awe of it while, at the same time, the fear of it.

*Ezekiel 2:4 (ESV)*

*4 The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'*

God then tells Ezekiel that the Israelites were also impudent and stubborn. Impudent is the Hebrew word *קָשֶׁה* (qāšē) which means hard, severe, unyielding. It comes from a root word that speaks of a heavy yoke placed on the shoulders of a mule or ox. From that, the idea of a rebellion comes as in oxen that need to be driven to pull the load. Israel was rebellious and stiff-necked. Stubborn is very much the same idea. It is the Hebrew word *וְהִזְקֵה-לֵב* (wēhizqê-lēb) which is a compound word which speaks of strong-willed, or strong inner self, hence the translation stubborn. Imagine being overwhelmed by the glory of God only to be told you are being sent to people who are rebellious and stubborn. Imagine what that would feel like.

God then tells Ezekiel that he will say to them, “thus says the Lord God.” Adoni Jehovah, the sovereign God. Ezekiel will use this title for God 217 times. It only occurs 103 more times in the rest of the Old Testament. This name stresses both God’s sovereign authority and His covenant-keeping faithfulness.<sup>17</sup> Ezekiel’s job was to declare the hard words from God, who is sovereign and omnipotent. He rules, and they were rebelling against the one in control.

*Ezekiel 2:5 (ESV)*

*5 And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.*

I love this verse because it seems like it speaks as much about our day as it does Ezekiel’s day. Ezekiel is commanded to preach to the rebellious people what God tells him to say, “thus says the Lord God,” but whether they listen or refuse to listen, at least they will know there has been a prophet among them. The metric for Ezekiel’s obedience is not the response of the people but the delivery of the message. Ezekiel was not responsible for the people’s reaction to the message from God; he was responsible for delivering the message.

I think we are in the same situation today. We have seen in the first five verses of chapter 2 that the Holy Spirit has to work in cooperation with the Word of God for transformation to occur. Ezekiel is just like us, responsible for delivering the message. The Holy Spirit then is responsible for working with the message to effect a change. We cannot affect a change simply on our words; they must be God’s words. We cannot affect a change in others; it takes the power of the Holy Spirit, not our spirit.

*Ezekiel 2:6 (ESV)*

*6 And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.*

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<sup>17</sup> Charles H. Dyer, “Ezekiel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1230.

The people Ezekiel was called to deliver a tough message to were stubborn and rebellious, but Ezekiel should not be afraid of their words or what they could do to him physically. God is setting a really dark and difficult stage for Ezekiel, certainly not a motivational speech. Three times in this one verse, God tells Ezekiel not to be afraid of the rebellious Israelites. God would repeat the warning in chapter 3, verse 9. God gave the same warning to Jeremiah, who was being commissioned to a difficult service:

*Jeremiah 1:8 (ESV)*

8 *Do not be afraid of them,  
for I am with you to deliver you,  
declares the LORD.”*

Jesus gave the same warning to His Apostles in:

*Matthew 10:26 (ESV)*

26 *“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.*

*Matthew 10:28 (ESV)*

28 *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Ezekiel’s mandate was to declare, “thus says the Lord God,” and he was to do it boldly and not in fear of the people the message was to go to. Don’t worry about how they receive the message and what they do to the messenger. The sovereign, omnipotent God gave you the commission, don’t be afraid of the people I control.

*Ezekiel 2:7 (ESV)*

7 *And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.*

God again tells Ezekiel to declare my word to them, even if they do not respond. Preach even if no one listens, Teach, even if no one learns anything. No matter if the people responded, Ezekiel was to preach. The response of the people did not determine the actions of Ezekiel. Clearly, the principle here is that the metric of success is not in the reaction but in obedience. God did not call Ezekiel to change the people, just to preach what He commanded him to preach. This same principle still holds true today in the church.

*1 Corinthians 3:6 (ESV)*

6 *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*

The Apostle Paul would echo this principle when he wrote to the Corinthians and reminded them of the different roles served in the church, remembering that God changes hearts.

### Focus of Ministry 2:8-3:3

*Ezekiel 2:8 (ESV)*

*8 “But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.”*

God continued to command Ezekiel in what he was to do. God tells Ezekiel not to become rebellious like the people he is to preach to. God further tells him to eat what He gives him to eat. God is using an analogy here, not actually expecting Ezekiel to eat a scroll of God’s Written word. We internalize what we eat. So God is telling Ezekiel to pay attention to the words he is delivering and make sure that he does not become rebellious as the people of Israel had become.

*Ezekiel 2:9–10 (ESV)*

*9 And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 10 And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.*

Ezekiel sees a hand stretching out to him with a scroll with writing on both the front and back. It was common during that period to use sheets of parchment, leather, or papyrus joined together to form scrolls. It was not common to have writing on both sides. But it does seem to be a characteristic of Divine Scrolls.

*Revelation 5:1 (ESV)*

*5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.*

Here in Revelation, John also sees a hand providing a double-sided scroll. Scholars have presented all sorts of reasons why the scroll given to Ezekiel and John was double-sided. But none are as logical and straightforward as God had a great deal for His prophets to say! God was giving Ezekiel the message he was to deliver. The hard and sometimes mournful messages that come as the result of rebellion against God.

The words of Lamentation, Mourning, and Woe fit perfectly with the messages delivered by Ezekiel as recorded in chapters 4-32 of the book of Ezekiel. These words also stand in contrast to the last section of the book of Ezekiel, in which the restoration of Israel is the main topic.

*Ezekiel 3:1–3 (ESV)*

*And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.*

At the end of chapter 2, Ezekiel is given a scroll by a hand that is represented as God. Now God is speaking to Ezekiel again, telling Ezekiel to eat the scroll and then go to speak to the house of Israel. He was commissioned to speak for God to the exiled nation of Israel.

Ezekiel took the scroll given to him and ate it. He discovered that the scroll was sweet as honey in his mouth. We see here that God again uses the title “son of man” for Ezekiel. God again tells Ezekiel to speak to the house of Israel. The word “speak” here is the Hebrew word דָּבַר (dbr) which has several significant meanings from its roots. The primary meaning in the root is “bring to order,” or to “set in a row,” with the idea of leading or directing, much as a shepherd leads his flock. Ezekiel spoke to Israel, setting everything straight for them and teaching them how to follow the real shepherd, the Messiah. Even though the scroll was sweet like honey in his mouth, we read later in 3:14 that it was bitter in his stomach. Ezekiel had a difficult message to deliver to Israel. It would cause him pain as well as pain for Israel. But he was commissioned by God to preach it and was not responsible for the results.

### Response to Ministry 3:4-11

*Ezekiel 3:4–6 (ESV)*

*4 And he said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. 5 For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israel— 6 not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you.*

God continues to speak to Ezekiel, giving him the words to speak. God then reminds Ezekiel that he is not being sent to a foreign people with a difficult language but to his own people, the people of Israel. God’s point to Ezekiel is that the words he speaks are understandable by the people and do not have the added problem of translation to deal with. Jeremiah had warned Israel that they needed to hear the word of God just a few years earlier. In fact, God had already spoken to them many times, and most recently, to them in keeping His word and sending the people into exile, out of the land.

As we look at God’s instructions to Ezekiel here in verse 4, there are three components to the instructions.

1. Ezekiel’s Speaking
2. Israel’s receiving (understanding) it

### 3. Israel's Obeying the received message

Ezekiel was the one commissioned by God to take the message given to him directly by God and deliver that message to the people of Israel. Ezekiel did not have the option to send someone else, and it was his responsibility to deliver the message. As the prophet of God, the people were obligated to receive the message he delivered. As the duly appointed, by God, as His messenger, Ezekiel was to be received by the people. He was delivering God's message, and the Jews were covenant bound to receive it. Ezekiel was a Jew, just like the people he was speaking to. Ezekiel spoke the same language as the people of Israel, so they were without excuse; they had to listen to Ezekiel.

*Ezekiel 3:7–9 (ESV)*

*7 But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. 8 Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. 9 Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house."*

It must have been frustrating for Ezekiel to be told to speak God's word to the people but being told they won't listen. Israel was obligated to receive the word of God from God's prophets. But they often would not correctly respond to the word of God. They were obligated to obey God, they had repeatedly committed to God that they would, but they didn't. But God told Ezekiel that the people would not listen; they would not obey. God expects His people to obey His word while, at the same time, knows when they won't. Israel had demonstrated over and over again that they would promise to obey but then not actually obey. Israel had received so many blessings from God, from the exodus from Egypt to receiving a very bountiful land to a beautiful temple to worship God in. Yet despite all the blessings and the warnings from God about being obedient to God's Word, they still were often disobedient.

In verse 8, God advises Ezekiel that He will give Ezekiel all he needs to withstand the assault from the people who reject God's word. God says He has given Ezekiel a hard face, just like the Jews he is to speak to. God also gave Ezekiel a forehead as hard as the Jews Ezekiel was to speak to. Of course, God is not speaking of Ezekiel physically, but that God has given to Ezekiel strength or hardness to withstand the attacks of the people. There is a play on words in the original Hebrew going on here. Ezekiel's name means "God is strong" or "God strengthens." The word strengthens also means "hardens." So when God says that I made your face and forehead hard, God is saying that He has strengthened Ezekiel to withstand all that comes at him. Like all of us, Ezekiel is empowered by God to accomplish His assignments and face the attack on us.

In verse 9, God describes Israel as a rebellious house. The word "rebellious house" is the Hebrew word בַּיִת־מְרִי (byt-mry) which is a compound word. "Byt" is "house" and is often used to speak of the people of Israel. "Mry" is a word that means bitter, obstinate, contentious, or rebellious. We see this activity in Israel, as was said earlier, from the Exodus onward. They were often bitter

with God, even after God had given them so much. For example, God provided an exodus for the Hebrews from Egypt, and when the first sign of trouble came, they became bitter, saying that it would have been better to be slaves in Egypt rather than die in the wilderness. God gave them food in the wilderness, but it was not the food they wanted. Israel had a pattern of being bitter and rebellious. God was simply reminding Ezekiel of that fact.

*Ezekiel 3:10–11 (ESV)*

*10 Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. 11 And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,’ whether they hear or refuse to hear.”*

God again refers to Ezekiel as the “son of man.” God then tells Ezekiel that the words God speaks to Ezekiel are to be received in his heart. The grammar of this command implies that Ezekiel was to continue to hear and receive the Word of God. A continuing relationship between Ezekiel and God. God called Ezekiel to receive His Word so Ezekiel could present the Word to the exiled Jews. But Ezekiel was also to internalize the Word of God. Ezekiel was to have an ongoing relationship with God in which he received the Word of God and delivered it to the people. As he received the Word of God, it would affect him as he prepared it for the people. That is the reality of anyone who speaks the word of God to the people. As we study and learn it in preparation to preach it, God works on us through it. We get to experience the Word of God before delivering the Word of God to others.

God then instructs Ezekiel to go to where the exiles are gathering. We learn in verse 15 Ezekiel was to go to the Chebar Canal to the encampment called Tell-Aviv.

*Ezekiel 3:15 (ESV)*

*15 And I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.*

Ezekiel was to deliver the Word of God to the people, whether they accepted it or not. The job of the preacher, of the prophet, is to deliver the Word of God to people. The responsibility of listening and accepting does not fall on the preacher or prophet but on the hearer. God reminds Ezekiel that the people will reject the Word of God, but it was still his responsibility to deliver it.

### [Waiting for Ministry 3:12-15](#)

*Ezekiel 3:12–15 (ESV)*

*12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great earthquake: “Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!” 13 It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, and the sound of a great earthquake. 14 The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my*

*spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. 15 And I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.*

Ezekiel began to hear the rustling of angel wings and was lifted up. Ezekiel then heard a voice that sounded like an earthquake behind him say, “Blessed be the glory of the Lord from its place.” This phrase appears in the text like a parenthetical thought in the middle of Ezekiel's description of what he was experiencing.

Notice that Ezekiel is describing again the throne chariot of God, which he saw in chapter 1. The Cherubim's wings touching each other, the sound of the wheels turning. A thunderous voice.



God picked up Ezekiel and transported him to Tell-Aviv on God's chariot throne. We don't know precisely where Ezekiel was in Babylon when he was pickup by God and carried over to the Chebar Canal. What a fantastic and frightening voyage this must have been for Ezekiel. Travel by anything in the air was not yet known. There were no planes or balloons or other air travel. All that was known was traveling by foot, an animal, or a boat on the water. This must have been an experience for Ezekiel to go through and then attempt to explain. “How did you get here” must have been asked of Ezekiel many times.

Look closely at verse 14.

*Ezekiel 3:14 (ESV)*

*14 The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me.*

Ezekiel says he went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit with the hand of the Lord strong on him. Bitterness is the same word as we just saw in verse 9 as God describes Israel as a rebellious people. It seems like the context here implies that Ezekiel was distressed by the hand of the Lord on him and on the situation he was thrust into. He was being sent to speak to rebellious people and told that they would reject the message he was being told to deliver. It also appears that Ezekiel was angry over the situation. I don't think so much angry at God for commanding him to speak to people who would refuse to accept the message. I think Ezekiel was angry that his people had rejected God and were now going to reject the message from God. I understand that emotion. There are many times that I get really frustrated with the work to provide God's Word in a clear and complete a fashion as I can, only to have people reject it and do what they want anyway. Despite the anger of Ezekiel, God used a firm hand on Ezekiel to force him to comply with His direction. God insisted that Ezekiel comply, even in the face of a people who would not comply.

As a result of the trip to the canal, the fantastic vision, and the heavy hand of God on Ezekiel, Ezekiel sat there, among the people, for seven days. There is a sense that Ezekiel was completely

overwhelmed by the glory of God, the command of God, and the responsibility God had given him. That makes perfect sense. Ezekiel had just witnessed God peel back the curtain between the spiritual world and the physical world. God showed Ezekiel a fantastic scene of God's chariot throne borne by four cherubim and the flapping wings with multidirectional wheels. Then God gives Ezekiel a message that would be difficult to deliver, understanding that they needed to hear and obey would reject the message and the messenger. Anyone of us would be overwhelmed by that. The weight of this experience caused Ezekiel to vegetate for seven days in the midst of the people. Ezekiel needed time to decompress.

## Dedication to Ministry 3:16 -5:17

### The Nature of Ezekiel's Preaching 3:16-21

*Ezekiel 3:16 (ESV)*

*16 And at the end of seven days, the word of the LORD came to me:*

After seven days, the Word of the Lord came again to Ezekiel. God permitted Ezekiel time to decompress and collect himself. But then it was time to get back to business.

*Ezekiel 3:17 (ESV)*

*17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.*

God tells Ezekiel that He called Ezekiel to be a watchman for the house of Israel. The watchmen were the ones that stood on the city wall and watched for the approach of an enemy or approaching problems to protect the city. It is in that way that Ezekiel was to serve as a watchman over Israel. He was to warn the people of coming problems and attacks. Not specifically enemy attacks but the punishment from God and the results of their own arrogance. Ezekiel was responsible for sounding the alarm to Israel that Judgment was coming; in fact, they were already under judgment from God, but more would be coming.

In verse 17, God made clear to Ezekiel that the messages that Ezekiel would be delivering would be messages of warning to the people of Israel. That in itself would be quite a burden on Ezekiel. Imagine if you were told that the only message you would deliver is terrible news. It would be like the nurse in the oncology clinic that only dealt with terminal patients. After a while, it would be hard to go to work day after day because you knew it would be bad news every day. What keeps them coming back every day are the days in which someone rings the bell to signify they have been cured of cancer.

*Ezekiel 3:18 (ESV)*

*18 If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.*

Then things get really real for Ezekiel. God provides a warning to Ezekiel concerning any warning God gives to Ezekiel, but Ezekiel does not convey that warning to Israel. The offending party will still be guilty of their crimes before God and will be punished, but God will also require payment from Ezekiel as well.

After dealing with the weight of the vision and the assignment by God, then the trip in which God carried Ezekiel on the wings of angels to the place where Ezekiel would face the people of Israel. The weight of that forced Ezekiel to vegetate for a week. Then God tells him, “by the way, I will hold you accountable for not warning Israel, I will expect an accounting from you, but Israel will still be punished.” In other words, you will not protect them by not warning them. I want you to think about that for just a moment. That is exactly what we see going on today. Many preachers fail to warn God has clearly given Scripture to protect people from these harsh words. God will hold those preachers accountable for their failure to speak what He has commanded us to speak. Judgment is coming, and many preachers will be judged right alongside those they were to warn.

*Ezekiel 3:19 (ESV)*

*19 But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.*

God then gives the other side of the equation to Ezekiel. If he does deliver the warning, regardless of the people's response, Ezekiel will be spared. Punishment will not fall on Ezekiel because he has done his job. Notice that the response of the person warned is not the criteria; Ezekiel's obedience is. A failure of the person to respond to the warning is irrelevant to the obedience of Ezekiel.

God told Ezekiel that his obedience delivers his soul. This should not be interpreted as salvation in the sense that we mean it today. I also don't think this is simply a reference to protecting his physical life from God's punishment. Ezekiel's obedience to God's command demonstrates his trust and faith in God. He is not saved because he is obedient. He is obedient because God saved him, and he is loyal to God. God is telling Ezekiel that the punishment for disobedience will not be given to him because he has been obedient as a result of his relationship with God.

*Ezekiel 3:20 (ESV)*

*20 Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand.*

Here in verse 20, God reiterates the warning to Ezekiel. If Ezekiel fails to give the warnings God gives to him, he will then be guilty before Him and will pay the price, and the other person will not be spared. We should not look at the “righteous person” here as a redeemed person but as a person who demonstrates the appearance of righteousness.

The phrase used here, “stumbling block,” has caused some a great deal of difficulty. We know from the rest of Scripture that God does not tempt us to sin. So when God says, “I lay a stumbling block before him,” God is not talking about tempting a person to sin. But that does not mean that God is obligated to provide a smooth path for us to walk on.

*Psalm 119:165 (ESV)*

*165 Great peace have those who love your law;*

*nothing can make them stumble.*

When we love God and His Word, we will recognize those things that cause us to stumble. When we take our eye off of Him on the path, we stumble. When our path is like that, we need to be watching God and the directions He gives and not stumbling on that path.

*Ezekiel 3:21 (ESV)*

*21 But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.”*

God also tells Ezekiel that if he is obedient and does warn of God’s judgment and the people respond, Ezekiel will see them physically live again. Ezekiel also will be spared the punishment of disobedience.

### [The Restriction of the Prophet 3:22-27](#)

*Ezekiel 3:22–23 (ESV)*

*22 And the hand of the LORD was upon me there. And he said to me, “Arise, go out into the valley, and there I will speak with you.” 23 So I arose and went out into the valley, and behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory that I had seen by the Chebar canal, and I fell on my face.*

Ezekiel recognizes that God brought him through this period and the struggle. God then directed him to get up and go into the valley where God would speak to Ezekiel. Where exactly God told Ezekiel to go is not known. There were many broad plains or valleys in the Mesopotamian region. The word “valley” is the Hebrew word *בְּקִיעַ* (bq‘h) is translated as plain or valley. About three-quarters of the time, it is translated as a valley and one quarter as plain. Whichever it was a plain or a valley, Ezekiel knew where to go and did not waste time, and began the journey. We also need to assume that there was a period of time between verse 21 and verse 22 of chapter three.

When Ezekiel got to the place commanded by God, he was met there by the Glory of God, like what he had previously seen. Ezekiel’s response was a proper and fitting level of awe and respect; he fell on his face in the worship of God.

*Ezekiel 3:24 (ESV)*

*24 But the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, “Go, shut yourself within your house.*

Again Ezekiel is powered by the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and Ezekiel was made to stand to his feet. This is the second time Ezekiel’s response was to fall on his face before the glory of God, and God raised him to his feet to give him instructions. God tells Ezekiel to go home and to shut himself in his house. Ezekiel was not to look for sympathy from others but was to rely on the Lord alone. He was to be quiet by himself in his house.

*Ezekiel 3:25 (ESV)*

*25 And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people.*

Scholars debate whether the cords here are real physical bindings or God was spiritually bounding Ezekiel. I think we are to interpret this because God bound Ezekiel to deliver God’s Word when it was given to him and only then. Ezekiel did not have a standing preaching ministry. He was to remain away from people, except special occasions, we will see later in the text(5:2, 12:3), and when God had given him something specific to preach. I think this purpose was to keep Ezekiel’s ministry a special warning and not a common speaking ministry. That would place greater emphasis on what God was saying through Ezekiel. His silence would confirm to the people that God’s Word was special.

*Ezekiel 3:26 (ESV)*

*26 And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house.*

There would be punishment if Ezekiel did not remain apart from the people unless God directed him to speak. Ezekiel was not to speak unless God directed him to and gave him the message to speak. “Cling to the roof of your mouth” was a phrase used to reflect a person incapable of speaking, much like what happens when you eat a spoonful of peanut butter. Ezekiel would not have the typical mission of being the constant preacher among the people. His message was very specific and only when directed by God.

*Ezekiel 3:27 (ESV)*

*27 But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house.*

Only when God speaks to Ezekiel will he then be able to speak to the people. God will then open his mouth and allow him to speak. God then warns Ezekiel that there will be those who reject what he has to say. Ezekiel was to remain silent except when God spoke to him and told him

what to say. That must have been difficult for Ezekiel. I can't imagine the struggle that must have caused Ezekiel.

### The Siege of Jerusalem 4:1-3

As we move into chapter 4, we see that in chapters 4 through 7, Ezekiel experiences five prophetic dramatizations. 4:1-8, 4:9-17, 5:1-17, 6:1-14, then a summary drama in 7:1-27.

*Ezekiel 4:1 (ESV)*

*4 “And you, son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem.*

God again refers to Ezekiel as “Son of Man” and tells him to place a brick before him. Some English translations use the word “tile” rather than “brick,” while the NIV uses “clay tablet.” The Hebrew word is לִבְנֵי (lěbēnâ) which can be translated as brick, tile, flagstone, clay writing tablet, stone slab, and various other forms. While most translations lean towards brick or tile, writing tablet is better to view this word. Ezekiel is told to take a לִבְנֵי (lěbēnâ) and draw on it the city of Jerusalem. It seems that a writing tablet makes more sense than a brick.

*Ezekiel 4:2 (ESV)*

*2 And put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a mound against it. Set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around.*

Ezekiel was to draw the city of Jerusalem on the tablet and draw out a military campaign against Jerusalem with siege ramps and battering rams against it. A siege ramp is a buildup against the walls of a city that allows the opposing troops to get to the top of the wall and make entry to the walled city. A battering ram is a large timber that is swung on a scaffold used to beat down the gates of a city or even weaker portions of the city wall.

*Ezekiel 4:3 (ESV)*

*3 And you, take an iron griddle, and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel.*

Ezekiel then simulated the futility of the cries of the people of Jerusalem by placing an Iron plate in front of the clay as an iron wall. The iron plate or griddle is the flat metal surface on which bread was baked in the ovens of Israel. The challenge for the Bible Student is to understand what the symbolism of this plate is. Some scholars argue that the plate represents the irresistible nature of the siege pictured in verse 2. Other scholars say that the plate represents the impregnable barrier between God and Jerusalem because of the sin of Israel.<sup>18</sup> It seems that this is perhaps best viewed as the barrier between God and the Jews by sin. God had promised Israel that should

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<sup>18</sup> Walvoord, John F., and Roy B. Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

they continue to sin, they would be removed from their land, including Jerusalem, and there was nothing that they could do other than obedience. Their own sin caused a barrier of sorts against God.

Verse 3 then closes with the statement that this picture of Jerusalem, under siege, separated by an iron pan, is a sign to the house of Israel. We should interpret “house of Israel” here as all 12 tribes, scattered abroad, in captivity, and remaining in Israel. God was telling Ezekiel to draw out the separation between the people of Israel and God. It is clear that God wanted Ezekiel to demonstrate the result of the sin of the people of Israel.

### Siege Results from Iniquity 4:4-8

*Ezekiel 4:4–8 (ESV)*

*4 “Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it. For the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their punishment. 5 For I assign to you a number of days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. 6 And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah. Forty days I assign you, a day for each year. 7 And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared, and you shall prophesy against the city. 8 And behold, I will place cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.*

These verses provide for the reader another glimpse into the punishment for Israel. But, these verses are also some of the most difficult to interpret accurately. The original language of the text is somewhat ambiguous due to textual issues.

In the previous three verses, Ezekiel represented God; here, in these verses, Ezekiel represents the people of Israel. God tells Ezekiel to lay on his left side with his head toward the drawing of Jerusalem for 390 days. From other verses in this section, we know that Ezekiel was bound Verse 8; he was to eat little food Verses 9-17 and only for a portion of each day verse 10. He was to lay on his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days. While the text does not specify what punishment is in view, some believe that the 390 days represent the 390 years of Egyptian captivity, and the 40 years represent the 40 years of wilderness wandering. Others believe that since Ezekiel’s ministry is focused on Jerusalem, the 390 years begin with Solomon's son Rehoboam in 931 BCE and concludes with the return from captivity in Babylon in 538BCE, which is about 393 years.

What seems to be clear is that God had been patient with Israel, allowing years of rebellion before bringing punishment upon Israel. Israel was almost always rebellious toward God and had very few periods of obedience. God had demonstrated extreme patience with Israel but was obligated to keep the conditions of the covenant He had with Israel. God had promised them blessings if Israel was obedient and punishment, including removal from the land for disobedience. Israel now found itself being punished by God, and it was Ezekiel’s job to deliver

to the people of Israel what God was saying. In this pericope, he delivered the message that they were in this situation because of their sins.

## Diet for Siege and Exile 4:9-17

*Ezekiel 4:9 (ESV)*

*9 “And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer, and put them into a single vessel and make your bread from them. During the number of days that you lie on your side, 390 days, you shall eat it.*

God also prescribed what Ezekiel was to eat during his demonstration of God’s punishment on Israel. God told Ezekiel he would take several grains (wheat, barley, millet, and emmer) along with beans and lentils, grind them together and bake bread from them. 8-grain bread before it became popular. This combination of grains and beans would not produce good bread but very poor bread without proper nutrition or flavor. This bread represented the poverty that the people remaining in Israel and Jerusalem would face during captivity. So hungry that they would actually resort to cannibalism. This was all predicted by Moses hundreds of years earlier.

*Deuteronomy 28:49–57 (ESV)*

*49 The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, 50 a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. 51 It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until they have caused you to perish.*

*52 “They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you. 53 And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. 54 The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left, 55 so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. 56 The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces, to her son and to her daughter, 57 her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything*

*she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns.*

*Ezekiel 4:10–11 (ESV)*

*10 And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; from day to day you shall eat it. 11 And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin; from day to day you shall drink.*

God also imposed limits on the amount of food he could eat each day. He was limited to about 10 ounces of food each day and about a pint of water each day. Ezekiel was living out a demonstration to the people of Israel about the results of being punished for sin.

*Ezekiel 4:12–13 (ESV)*

*12 And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung.”  
13 And the LORD said, “Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations where I will drive them.”*

It was common to use dried dung as fuel for a fire. But the use of human excrement was viewed as a defilement in Mosaic Law. Ezekiel was to prepare and bake his bread in the sight of the people in exile. It was to be a demonstration to the people of just how bad their offense was to God.

*Ezekiel 4:14–15 (ESV)*

*14 Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never defiled myself. From my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has tainted meat come into my mouth.” 15 Then he said to me, “See, I assign to you cow’s dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread.”*

Ezekiel objected to cooking his food on human excrement, and God allowed him to use cow dung for fire fuel. Mosaic law prescribed that the outhouse is outside the camp, not to be brought into the camp. Dung was physically and spiritually unclean, and to eat food prepared over a fire of dung would make the food unclean, which would make the one who eats it unclean.

*Ezekiel 4:16–17 (ESV)*

*16 Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, behold, I will break the supply of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. 17 I will do this that they may lack bread and water, and look at one another in dismay, and rot away because of their punishment.*

God then makes it clear to Ezekiel what the punishment will be like. Food will be in such short supply it will have to be rationed, as will water. We have already seen the prediction by Moses in Deuteronomy that the people will resort to eating each other as food become in such short supply. Human excrement will be the only fuel for the fire as all the animals will have been eaten, and the wood will have already been burned. The punishment was real, and it was hard. They had violated God and His character and refused to submit to God. The punishment was promised.

## Judgements on Inhabitants of Jerusalem 5:1-12

*Ezekiel 5:1–4 (ESV)*

*5 “And you, O son of man, take a sharp sword. Use it as a barber’s razor and pass it over your head and your beard. Then take balances for weighing and divide the hair. 2 A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. And a third part you shall take and strike with the sword all around the city. And a third part you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword after them. 3 And you shall take from these a small number and bind them in the skirts of your robe. 4 And of these again you shall take some and cast them into the midst of the fire and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will come out into all the house of Israel.*

Again God refers to Ezekiel as the “Son of Man.” God tells Ezekiel to take a sharp sword and use it as a razor to shave his head and beard. He was then to divide the hair and beard into thirds. One-third to be burned in front of the city when the siege is completed on the clay tablet, he drew on in chapter 4. One-third of his hair and beard was to be cut up by the sword. The final one-third was to be thrown to the wind. The first third represented the people who died due to the famine. The second third represents those who died at the hands of the Babylonian Army. The final third represented the Jews being scattered in the diaspora. Ezekiel was also to take a small portion of the hair and place it in the hem of his garment to protect it. This was the remnant that God would preserve and return to the land. A small portion of the remnant will also be lost, indicating that even those spared by God cannot take their position for granted. Some of the remnant will also be lost. God was telling Ezekiel to act out symbolism for the people of Israel.

*Ezekiel 5:5–6 (ESV)*

*5 “Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. 6 And she has rebelled against my rules by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries all around her; for they have rejected my rules and have not walked in my statutes.*

Jerusalem will factor into God’s plans for the world in the future. Jerusalem will be the world’s political center in the future, yet God permitted the inhabitants to suffer such a fate as we saw in chapter 4. The people of Israel and Jerusalem rebelled against God and did not remain loyal to

the covenant they had agreed to with God. The punishment was part of the covenant with God, and He was obligated to punish them. God also lays out the charges against Jerusalem, which represents all the people of Israel.

*Ezekiel 5:7–11 (ESV)*

*7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not walked in my statutes or obeyed my rules, and have not even acted according to the rules of the nations that are all around you, 8 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. 9 And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. 10 Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers. And I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds. 11 Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw. My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity.*

It had to be really hard for Ezekiel to hear this from God. God outlines the charges against Israel generally and Jerusalem specifically. God says that since Israel did not walk according to the instruction God had given them and to which they had agreed to obey, and as a result, God said He was against them. God will execute judgments in the sight of the rest of the world against Israel. The world as a whole will see the punishment given to Israel. In fact, God said that He would punish Israel in a way that He had never done before, and He would never do it again. The punishment will be so bad, and conditions become so bad that, as Moses had predicted, cannibalism will occur. Those who survive this period will be scattered all around the world.

The scattering of Israel began with the ten northern tribes when Assyria took those tribes into captivity in 722 BCE. It then continued with the Babylonian captivity, which began in 605 BCE through 586 BCE. Even though 70 years later, Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuilt it and the temple, Israel remained controlled by others until disappearing completely when General Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple again in 70. Israel remained scattered without a homeland until May 1948, when the modern nation of Israel was declared independent. It does appear that the diaspora spoken of here will continue until the Messianic kingdom begins with Jesus on the throne of David.

*Ezekiel 5:12 (ESV)*

*12 A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in your midst; a third part shall fall by the sword all around you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds and will unsheathe the sword after them.*

God now explains to Ezekiel the illustration of his shaved hair. One-third will die from starvation, one-third will die by the sword of the Babylonian Army, and one-third will be scattered. Even those scattered will be subject to violence. This certainly has been true for the Jews in history.

### The Nations Will Be Appalled at Israel 5:13-17

*Ezekiel 5:13–17 (ESV)*

*13 “Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am the LORD—that I have spoken in my jealousy—when I spend my fury upon them. 14 Moreover, I will make you a desolation and an object of reproach among the nations all around you and in the sight of all who pass by. 15 You shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations all around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with furious rebukes—I am the LORD; I have spoken— 16 when I send against you the deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and break your supply of bread. 17 I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will rob you of your children. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”*

God said He would vent His fury at Israel and, by doing that, satisfy Himself. God, as holy and righteous, had to comply with the covenant He had agreed to with Israel. He had to punish them for their violations of the covenant. In punishing Israel, God complied with the covenant and satisfied His holy character. Ultimately Israel will know that God is Lord. He is sovereign and holy. The punishment of Israel will conclude when Israel sees the Messiah come to the throne and rule the world. God was jealous of His people and wanted them to love Him and obey Him. Ultimately that will be the final outcome.

The next few verses then explain what God’s chosen people, the Jews, will go through until Jesus sits on the throne of David. The world will reproach them; they will be hated and the object of attacks by the rest of the world. Until the time of the Messianic kingdom, Israel will suffer through all sorts of difficulties and persecution. We must always remember that God has an end to the punishment of Israel and will be the best time for Israel in all of History.

## No Place for Pride 6:1-7:27

### Idolatry on the Mountains 6:1-7

As we enter chapter 6, we begin to see more about the rebellion of the people of Israel.

*Ezekiel 6:1–2 (ESV)*

*6 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,*

We see again here in verse 1 of chapter 6 that Ezekiel is quoting God’s direct word to him. God again calls him “son of man” in verse 1. God tells Ezekiel to “set your face toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them.” This is the first time we see this phrase, “Set your face against,” we will also see it in 21:2; 25:2; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2. It is a phrase that begins several prophecies in the book of Ezekiel.

The phrase “mountains of Israel” also occurs several times in the book of Ezekiel, but nowhere else in the Old Testament. It is a way of describing the entirety of the Promised Land of Israel.

*Deuteronomy 11:11 (ESV)*

*11 But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven,*

It also stands in contrast to where the Exiles found themselves, the valleys of Babylon. The people of Israel were in the valleys of Babylon because they had violated the covenant with God that required them not to worship other gods. But Israel was guilty of following other gods and erecting shrines and places of worship for those other gods.

*Ezekiel 6:3 (ESV)*

*3 and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.*

God directs Ezekiel to warn the exiles that the places of worship of false gods will be destroyed through force. Not only the places of worship but also those who worship there, those who have turned from God to false gods. The places of worship for the false gods have to be destroyed to make room for worshipping the one true God during the Messianic kingdom.

*Ezekiel 6:4–7 (ESV)*

*4 Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols. 5 And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. 6 Wherever you dwell, the cities shall be waste and the high places*

*ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined, your idols broken and destroyed, your incense altars cut down, and your works wiped out. 7 And the slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the LORD.*

Ezekiel's prophecy of what will happen in the future to Israel and the places of worship of false gods continues in these verses. Ezekiel says that the altars will become desolate, and the incense altars will be broken. Ezekiel also says that the dead bodies of Jews who worship those false gods will be laid at the feet of the torn-down alters.

The words "wiped out" is the Hebrew word וְנִמְחָה (wěnimḥû) and is the same word is translated in Genesis 6:7 as blot out:

*Genesis 6:7 (ESV)*

*7 So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."*

Clearly, the intent here is to see that the result of the sin of man is death. It is no different today than it was in the days of Ezekiel. Ultimately God will be seen as the Lord. All of human history will ultimately point to a sovereign God who has been in control of His creation and will eventually receive glory for everything that has occurred. We may not know at the time of an event how God will receive glory, but the reality is He ultimately will.

### [A Remnant Will Remain 6:8-10](#)

*Ezekiel 6:8–10 (ESV)*

*8 "Yet I will leave some of you alive. When you have among the nations some who escape the sword, and when you are scattered through the countries, 9 then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. And they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations. 10 And they shall know that I am the LORD. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them."*

God does promise through Ezekiel that there will always be a remnant alive. Those who will escape the sword during the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world and the work of Satan to destroy them. Think about what the Jewish people have gone through since the northern tribes were taken into captivity in 722 BCE. The southern tribes were taken into captivity during the siege of Jerusalem by Babylon from 605BCE to 586 BCE. Many Jews got to return to Jerusalem and Israel 70 years later, but still under the control of the Persians. Then control went to the Greeks after Alexander the Great took over Persia in 33BCE. After the death of Alexander the Great and the division of his kingdom, Israel eventually fell into the hands of Rome when the Romans defeated the Seleucids in 63BCE. Then in 70AD, General Titus of Rome destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and destroyed the city of Jerusalem, beginning the great diaspora which

remains to this day. Even though Israel became a country again in May 1948, there still remain millions of Jews dispersed throughout the world. The nation today in Israel is a representative republic and not a monarchy, so it cannot be the end of the diaspora. The dispersion of Jews will come when there is a king on the throne of David, which will occur in the Millennial Kingdom with Jesus on the throne.

During the diaspora, there have been repeated attempts to destroy the people of Israel. The Seleucid and Ptolemy kingdoms, which passed control of Israel back and forth after Alexander the Great's death, both had systemic anti-jews laws and activities resulting in the deaths of many Jews. Rome dealt with Israel a little better but still subjected Israel, killing thousands and ultimately destroying much of Israel. After the fall of the Roman Empire and the advance of Islam, Jews were again the target of aggression. During the middle ages, Jews were forced from kingdom to kingdom in Europe, often being victims of attack and confiscation of property. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed during the crusades as the crusaders made their way through Europe and the Middle East. During more recent history, the Jews suffered at the hands of European monarchs and advancing Islamic Caliphates. Of course, during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, six million-plus Jews were killed in Europe alone, not to mention the thousands that were killed in the middle east at the same time. The dispersed Jews for the last 2700 years have had a very difficult time and suffered attack after attack. This oppression will continue until Jesus sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

### Abomination in Israel 6:11-14

*Ezekiel 6:11–14 (ESV)*

*11 Thus says the Lord GOD: “Clap your hands and stamp your foot and say, Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, for they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. 12 He who is far off shall die of pestilence, and he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who is left and is preserved shall die of famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing aroma to all their idols. 14 And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, from the wilderness to Riblah. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”*

Ezekiel continues in his prophecy from God about what will befall the people of Israel. Ezekiel tells the exile Jews to clap their hands and stomp their feet because of all the abominations that the house of Israel had committed. The punishment they would sustain over the period the dispersion was warranted by God because of the sins of Israel. Ezekiel's phrases “he who is far off” and “he who is near” are references to Jews in every part of the world. Near is a reference to Jews in Israel, while far off is a reference to Jews in the rest of the world. Ezekiel is saying that Jews worldwide will deal with abuse and attacks during this period; God is punishing them for their failure to keep the covenant with God. The ultimate result of this punishment of the Jews

will be God's glory and the real knowledge of who God really is for Israel. Those slain during this time will be a testament to their own false gods as their decaying bodies and bones pile up before their idols. God, through Ezekiel, promises to make their homes and towns desolate.

In verse 14, Ezekiel says something that has many scholars unsure of what is being said.

*Ezekiel 6:14 (ESV)*

*14 And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, **from the wilderness to Riblah**. Then they will know that I am the LORD."*

There is some dispute concerning the location and name presented here as Riblah. The Net Notes state:

*The Vulgate reads the name as "Riblah," a city north of Damascus. The MT reads Diblah, a city otherwise unknown. The letters resh (ר) and dalet (ד) may have been confused in the Hebrew text. The town of Riblah was in the land of Hamath (2 Kgs 23:33) which represented the northern border of Israel (Ezek 47:14).<sup>19</sup>*

If the original includes "Riblah," Ezekiel is speaking of all of Israel. With the wilderness in the south, then north to the city of Riblah north of Damascus, all of Israel would be in view. If the original text has Diblah, which is believed to be in Moab, East of Israel, and the Dead Sea, the reference includes all of Israel from the East to the wilderness in the south. Either way, the statement references all of the land of Israel that will have God's hand stretched out against it. There will be no place to hide from the wrath of God. Ultimately, to God's glory!

## Announcement of the End 7:1-9

*Ezekiel 7:1-2 (ESV)*

*7 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "And you, O son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel: An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land.*

Again, we see that Ezekiel is addressed as God's "Son of Man" as God provides to Ezekiel the prophecy. God tells Ezekiel that the end is approaching. In the previous chapter, the Word of the Lord came and was focused on the idolatry that caused God to bring a new message here in chapter 7. Here at the beginning of chapter 7, the focus is on the punishment due to Judah because of her idolatry.

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<sup>19</sup> Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Eze 6:14.

God says that an end has come to the four corners of the land. Clearly, a reference to not be taken literally but figuratively speaking of the entire country. Not one portion of Judah will be spared from the punishment coming from God.

*Ezekiel 7:3–4 (ESV)*

*3 Now the end is upon you, and I will send my anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will punish you for all your abominations. 4 And my eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity, but I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the LORD.*

This ominous warning from God revealed the true extent of punishment that would be coming upon Judah. Five times in these early verses, God says that the “end” of Judah has come. God says He is unleashing His anger against Israel without pity. What we need to understand here is that God is not lashing out in emotion. The characterizing of God through the use of human emotions is called an anthropomorphization—attributing to God human characteristics so that He can be understood to a greater extent by man. God does not respond out of emotion but out of His character. God is just, righteous and holy. In his holiness and righteousness, He brings punishment on those who violate His character. God is also gracious and merciful, so He does not bring punishment immediately. His character obligates Him to deal with the sin of Israel, particularly when their sin involved the violating of a covenant between Israel and God. Just as God is compelled to carry His promised blessings, He is also obligated to bring the punishment agreed to in the covenant. To describe His response to the sin of Israel, God says that in His “anger” upon Israel, punishment comes.

Look at the end end of verse 4. The purpose of the punishment on Israel will be that they (Israel) will know that He is the Lord. “Lord” is the Hebrew name of God, called the Tetragrammaton, yod hey wow hey, most often viewed as Jehovah. By God reminding them that He is Jehovah, the Lord, He reminds them that He is the creator/sustainer of the universe, the sovereign ruler of the world. He is the one who sets the rules and requires obedience, particularly those who have agreed to be obedient to Him. The ultimate end of everything in the world is God will be glorified as the LORD.

*Ezekiel 7:5–6 (ESV)*

*5 “Thus says the Lord GOD: Disaster after disaster! Behold, it comes. 6 An end has come; the end has come; it has awakened against you. Behold, it comes.*

God continues to describe to Ezekiel the punishment that is coming upon Judah. God reiterates that He alone is God, the sovereign ruler. The coming punishment is an unprecedented disaster, not previously seen. The Net Translation records it this way:

*Ezekiel 7:5 (NET)*

*7:5 “This is what the sovereign Lord says: A disaster—a one-of-a-kind disaster—is coming!*

Israel had never experienced what it was about to experience. The covenant between God and Israel was very specific and ratified and re-ratified several times in Israel's history. The covenant specified their use of the Land was tied to their obedience to God. Yet God had not yet removed them from the land. The northern tribes had been removed before this from the land, but Judah in the south felt that there was no way God would ever expel them from the land. After all, they are God's chosen. There was a prevailing view in that day that as God's chosen, they would never be removed from the land. So what was coming was new, never before experienced. God describes this coming action as unprecedented. It is almost like God said that you had pushed this as far as you could, and now the punishment is coming.

*Ezekiel 7:7–9 (ESV)*

*7 Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land. The time has come; the day is near, a day of tumult, and not of joyful shouting on the mountains. 8 Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you, and spend my anger against you, and judge you according to your ways, and I will punish you for all your abominations. 9 And my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. I will punish you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the LORD, who strikes.*

The destruction of Jerusalem, the removal of Judah from the land of Israel is seen as doom. The word doom is the Hebrew word הַצְפִּירָה (hšpyrh). The difficulty is that the definition of this word is not really known. In the ESV, this word is translated using two words, doom and diadem. Two words that do not appear to have any relationship to each other. It appears to have as root the idea of a circle or sphere, which then makes some sense of a diadem or crown. The Dictionary of Biblical Languages of Semantic Domains states:

***circlet**, crown, wreath, i.e., an adornment placed and worn on the head as a sign of honor or increase of status (Isa 28:5+), note: this circlet can be either metallic or a braided wreath, the ety. suggests the latter; 2. LN 22.1–22.14 (most versions) **doom**, disaster, i.e., a state or condition of a time of trouble as a figurative extension of royal power (a crown) from an enemy (Eze 7:7, 10+), note: in context, this word is parallel to the word “time” in the next clause and so a temporal word is possible,<sup>20</sup>*

As an extension of royal power, doom comes in this case as punishment. I love the detail this word provides for us concerning the punishment of Judah. An extension of imperial power is the reality that the Lord God, sovereign God King of the universe, is bringing punishment upon Israel. God, as sovereign, has the right and the responsibility to bring this punishment. Through Ezekiel, God is making it very clear that punishment is coming from their actions and their abuse of God's mercy. They brought in on themselves, and they have no one to blame other than themselves. They violated the character of God after promising to be obedient.

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<sup>20</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

God will not spare them any of the punishment they have coming. He has provided them mercy for hundreds of years, but time for mercy was over, and punishment was sure. Again we see the result of the punishment will be that Israel knows that God is the one who punishes them.

The realization that God is the sovereign Lord is an essential lesson for us to know and learn. Ultimately everything that occurs in this universe will bring glory to God and will show His sovereignty. We often think that the sin of this world reveals God's lack of control. But ultimately, it will show that God is sovereign and completely in control. We must always remember that God is always in control, even when it appears that He is not.

*Ezekiel 7:10–11 (ESV)*

*10 “Behold, the day! Behold, it comes! Your doom has come; the rod has blossomed; pride has budded. 11 Violence has grown up into a rod of wickedness. None of them shall remain, nor their abundance, nor their wealth; neither shall there be preeminence among them.*

God uses various images to describe what has happened and what is going to happen. The first image is of a budding branch. It goes along for a while as a bud until all of a sudden, it bursts forth in a full flower. We may also view the use of the imagery of Rod as being a reference to the Rod of Aaron in Numbers 17.

### Day of the Lord 7:10-27

*Numbers 17:10–11 (ESV)*

*10 And the LORD said to Moses, “Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumblings against me, lest they die.” 11 Thus did Moses; as the LORD commanded him, so he did.*

In the context of Numbers 16-17, the staff or rod of Aaron reflects God's choice of Aaron as His representative as the high priest. It also reveals God's displeasure with the sins of Korah and the punishment given to the family of Korah for their rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

Judgment was coming and would dramatically affect the wealth of Israel. In the exile of Judah, following the exile of Israel one hundred years, earlier tremendous wealth would be lost. The lost wealth would not be returned to Israel until the rise of the Messiah to the throne of David in the millennial kingdom. I acknowledge that Israel exists today and has wealth greater than many of the nations around it. Yet, the wealth referred to here is more than just monetary wealth; it is the wealth of relationship with God as His chosen people. The possession of the land would be lost, and all that wealth would end up being transferred to Babylon's control.

God also says that there will no longer be preeminence among the people. The captivity will bring Judah's people to remove any prominence or benefit of being God's chosen people. For years Israel thought God would spare them because of their being God's Chosen. Then when Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria, Judah thought certainly God would exile us since we

really are God's chosen people. But here, God reminds them that the prominence they felt they had does not actually exist. God is reminding them that He will actually follow through with His covenant with them and punish them.

*Ezekiel 7:12–13 (ESV)*

*12 The time has come; the day has arrived. Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn, for wrath is upon all their multitude. 13 For the seller shall not return to what he has sold, while they live. For the vision concerns all their multitude; it shall not turn back; and because of his iniquity, none can maintain his life.*

Israel's possession of the land comes to an end, and there will be great deals in acquiring the land. But God warns the seller and the buyer not to celebrate too much because the punishment will ultimately affect everyone, not just a few. The property will be lost, and the seller has no ability to obtain the land again in their lifetime. God tells Ezekiel that the coming punishment will affect everyone; no one will escape; it is complete.

*Ezekiel 7:14–15 (ESV)*

*14 "They have blown the trumpet and made everything ready, but none goes to battle, for my wrath is upon all their multitude. 15 The sword is without; pestilence and famine are within. He who is in the field dies by the sword, and him who is in the city famine and pestilence devour.*

Blow the trumpet here refers to the thought of summoning Israel to defend itself from the wrath of God. But no one will respond, and even if they did, they could not protect themselves from God's power. Judah, for years, had worked to appease Babylon, and that did not work. Israel knew the reality that they could not defend Jerusalem for very long against the power of Babylon.

In 605, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho in Carchemish in what is today Syria. Following the battle, Babylon invaded Judah. Babylon had just defeated the Assyrians who held the northern tribes, and now they focused on the southern tribes. Egypt had protected Jehoiakim, but then before the battle of Carchemish realized Babylon would win, so he changed his diligence from Egypt to Babylon, but that did not prevent the siege on Jerusalem. During these years, Nebuchadnezzar attempted to take Egypt but did not prevail, so as the Babylonian troops came back from Egypt, they would spend some time working on Jerusalem. The Jews still occupied the city but were basically under control outside the walls by Babylon. In 597, Babylon again laid siege to the city of Jerusalem, which resulted in King Jehoiachin being taken captive to Babylon along with 10,000 others. (Jer 52) In 586, another siege of Jerusalem by Babylon resulted in the city and temple being destroyed. Zedekiah surrendered to Babylon; the punishment was full.

This date can be fixed on August 14, 586 BCE through Assyrian, Babylonian, and Historical Jewish records. Israel had done all it could to defend itself but could not. The power of the Babylonians was just too great. The "sword without" is a reference to the Babylonian military

outside the city walls. Judah had no control of the countryside and could not produce grain or other food for the city. They had to rely on what was in the city. Life in Jerusalem was horrible during those years from 605BCE to 586 BCE. With enemy troops outside the walls and growing under, disease and filth inside the walls. Death was a reality for almost everyone in Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 7:16 (ESV)*

*16 And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, each one over his iniquity.*

The only refuge for some would be to flee to the mountains, where food was scarce, and water was difficult to find. The reference is to where doves usually are found. Typically doves would be in the valleys where food and water are easy to find. But when the bird catcher would come to capture them, they would fly up to the mountains for protection.

*Psalms 11:1 (ESV)*

*1 In the LORD I take refuge;  
how can you say to my soul,*

*“Flee like a bird to your mountain,*

*Ezekiel 7:17–18 (ESV)*

*17 All hands are feeble, and all knees turn to water. 18 They put on sackcloth, and horror covers them. Shame is on all faces, and baldness on all their heads.*

God continues to describe how incapable Judah will be to defend themselves. With feeble hands and knees, they will provide as much resistance as water does. Judah could do nothing to protect itself. Their only response would be lamentation. They would end wearing sackcloth, which symbolizes mourning. In shame, they would cover the face, and their heads would be shaved. All are signifying their guilt and grief. The question the Bible Student naturally ponders here is of what were the Jews in Jerusalem ashamed of. Were they ashamed of their failure to live up to their commitment to God in the covenant, or were they embarrassed at being defeated by Babylon?

*Ezekiel 7:19 (ESV)*

*19 They cast their silver into the streets, and their gold is like an unclean thing. Their silver and gold are not able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity.*

Judah and Jerusalem could not buy their way out of this judgment; the punishment was coming. They would be hungry without a way to satisfy it. Their wealth, their gold, and silver provided them nothing under this oppression from Babylon. They could not buy food with it, and they could not eat it. What had been very important to them now was basically worthless.

*Ezekiel 7:20–21 (ESV)*

*20 His beautiful ornament they used for pride, and they made their abominable images and their detestable things of it. Therefore I make it an unclean thing to them. 21 And I will give it into the hands of foreigners for prey, and to the wicked of the earth for spoil, and they shall profane it.*

The temple in Jerusalem was a symbol to Israel and the world. The Jews took great pride in it and thought it would stand forever. But toward the end, they had used the gold from the temple to create shrines to false gods and defiled the beautiful temple. Because of that, God would make the people of Israel unclean and give them control of a foreign people.

When we consider how often in the Old Testament God mentioned clean/unclean, holy/unholy, and had made ritual purity such a priority, for God to now, say He would make them unclean had to be felt like quite a hit on Israel. God was not going to make them clean but unclean, unacceptable to Him. That is the worst of the punishment.

*Ezekiel 7:22 (ESV)*

*22 I will turn my face from them, and they shall profane my treasured place. Robbers shall enter and profane it.*

God had chosen the descendants of Abraham out of all the people in the world, but now was telling them that since they had continuously violated their agreement with Him, He was going to set them aside. He was going to allow their treasured place to be destroyed and become unclean. Their punishment from God was He would turn His face from them.

*Ezekiel 7:23–24 (ESV)*

*23 “Forge a chain! For the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence. 24 I will bring the worst of the nations to take possession of their houses. I will put an end to the pride of the strong, and their holy places shall be profaned.*

Again God uses symbolism to describe what is coming for Judah. Make a chain is a reference to the “perp walk” of our day. Prisoners being walked out chained together. God was going to, in effect, “perp walk” Judah before the world for violating the covenant with Him. Israel and Judah had filled the land with violations of God’s character, and they would be shown to the world for it.

Not only would they be “perp-walked,” but God would give possession of their land and their houses to a foreign power who was viewed as being the worst of them all. The pride of Israel would come to an end as Babylon defeated them. The people that were once the most powerful in the region would stand defeated. The once holy temple and city would become common as it was defiled by the heathen walking in it.

*Ezekiel 7:25–26 (ESV)*

*25 When anguish comes, they will seek peace, but there shall be none.  
26 Disaster comes upon disaster; rumor follows rumor. They seek a vision from the prophet, while the law perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders.*

When Babylon does attack, the Jews will seek peace, but it is too late for that. Peace will not come. Disasters will keep on coming, seemingly without end. As in any disaster, rumors will also be a source of difficulty for Israel. Someone will say peace is at hand until the next wave of violence takes place. The entire time people will find themselves being up and down in hope and emotion, which causes high additional stress. No comfort will come from the priests or the prophets.

*Ezekiel 7:27 (ESV)*

*27 The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are paralyzed by terror. According to their way I will do to them, and according to their judgments I will judge them, and they shall know that I am the LORD.”*

Here again, God reminds them that all of this will bring the people to the reality that He is the Lord, the sovereign creator/sustainer. Israel and Judah had forgotten this reality, and their punishment will bring them back to proper understanding. King Jehoiachin was in Babylon, and his son Zedekiah was in Jerusalem but without power to correct anything. Judgment was coming, and it could not be stopped.

## God Should be First 8:1-11:25

We move into a section that includes Ezekiel’s second vision or fantastic experience, this time of the temple in Jerusalem.

### Idolatry in the temple 8:1-18

*Ezekiel 8:1 (ESV)*

*8 In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there.*

There is a great deal of information in this verse. First, Ezekiel provides us specific dating information. This vision or experience occurs 14 months after the previous vision. This would equate to September 19, 592 BCE, or the 413<sup>th</sup> day of the siege on Jerusalem. Remember, Ezekiel is not in Jerusalem but is under house arrest in Babylon. While under house arrest, the Jewish leadership in exile would come to him for prophetic direction.

Verse one concludes with an interesting statement. While Ezekiel was sitting in his home in exile, he says, “the hand of the Lord fell upon me there.” Several Old Testament scholars view this as more than a visual experience, seeing it more as a physical experience.

*Ezekiel 8:2 (ESV)*

*2 Then I looked, and behold, a form that had the appearance of a man. Below what appeared to be his waist was fire, and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal.*

With Ezekiel being put in a trance or transported, he sees what appears to be a man. He saw that this man appeared to have a fire around his waist, and his upper body was radiant like gleaming metal. Ezekiel’s description of this figure seems to link this figure to the figure seen in his previous vision. Whether this is intentional by Ezekiel is not known.

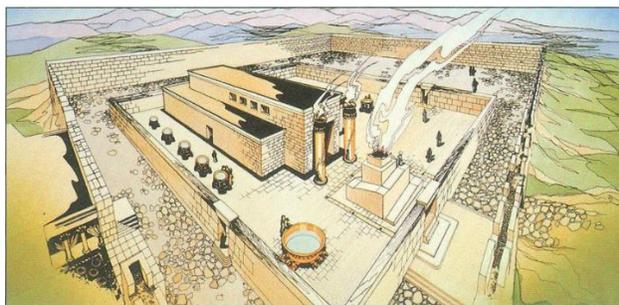


*Ezekiel 8:3 (ESV)*

*3 He put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head, and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.*

This man with fire around the waist and brightly gleaming put a hand out to Ezekiel, and he was transported in the sky to Jerusalem. This figure brought Ezekiel to the gateway of the inner court that faces the north. Ezekiel describes that he was taken by the hand and carried between the heavens and the earth, sometimes used to describe birds fly the sky. Ezekiel was transported through this from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Ezekiel describes that he was brought to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces



north. This gate was one of three gates that would permit going from the outer court to the inner court of the temple complex. Ezekiel’s description fits that he was standing in the outer court, looking south toward the inner court of the temple complex.

Ezekiel also describes that he was an idol of jealousy that provokes jealousy. In verse 5, he calls it the idol of jealousy. This idol violated the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment.

*Exodus 20:4 (ESV)*

*4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*

What god this idol represented is not known, but being an idol in the temple, was sure to provoke jealousy from God. The temple was the sacred place that Jehovah God met with the people of Israel. We do know that Manasseh had placed an idol of Asherah in the temple during his reign.

*2 Kings 21:7 (ESV)*

*7 And the carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever.*

While Manasseh later removed this idol, it appeared back in the temple sometime after his death to be removed by King Josiah during his reforms.

*2 Kings 23:6 (ESV)*

*6 And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron and beat it to dust and cast the dust of it upon the graves of the common people.*

As Ezekiel stood there looking at the idol in the temple, the glory of God was present with him.

*Ezekiel 8:4 (ESV)*

*4 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the valley.*

What form the "glory of the Lord" was in is not really known. It can be assumed that the "glory of the Lord" was in the form of the image of a man on fire in the lower half and gleaming brightly in the upper half.

*Ezekiel 8:5–6 (ESV)*

*5 Then he said to me, "Son of man, lift up your eyes now toward the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and behold, north of the altar gate, in the entrance, was this image of jealousy. 6 And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations."*

Again calling Ezekiel the "son of man," God tells Ezekiel to look north, to the north of the altar gate in the entrance at the image of Jealousy. With Ezekiel focused on the Idol, God asks him a rhetorical question, "do you see what they are doing, the great abominations the house of Israel is committing to drive me out of the temple?"

God had told Israel that He will not share His glory with an idol.

*Isaiah 42:8 (ESV)*

*8 I am the LORD; that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to carved idols.*

If Israel insisted on another god being in the temple, then He would leave. We need to remember the historical context here. The temple was where God met with Israel. The top of the ark of the covenant, which resided in the Holy of Holies in the innermost portion of the temple, was the throne of God on earth. When the temple was completed, God visibly entered the temple, as seen by the bright light entering the temple. It was an abomination to now have an idol of a false god in the temple. God was not going to share His glory with any false god.

Notice what God tells Ezekiel at the end of verse 6. God says that Ezekiel will see greater abominations than the false god in the temple. God being forced out of His house would not be the worst thing Ezekiel will ever see. Think about the enormity of that! What fear would induce in a follower of God?

*Ezekiel 8:7–8 (ESV)*

*7 And he brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, there was a hole in the wall. 8 Then he said to me, “Son of man, dig in the wall.” So I dug in the wall, and behold, there was an entrance.*

God brought Ezekiel to the court entrance, where Ezekiel could see a hole in the wall. God tells Ezekiel to dig in the hole to make it larger. In doing so, he discovered a secret entrance. The entrance to the court is probably the inner court. So it would appear that Ezekiel was standing in the outer court looking at the wall that separated the outer court from the inner court.

*Ezekiel 8:9 (ESV)*

*9 And he said to me, “Go in, and see the vile abominations that they are committing here.”*

After Ezekiel finds the previously hidden door, God tells him to go through the door and see the abominations committed there.

*Ezekiel 8:10–11 (ESV)*

*10 So I went in and saw. And there, engraved on the wall all around, was every form of creeping things and loathsome beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel. 11 And before them stood seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the smoke of the cloud of incense went up.*

Ezekiel responded by going into the chamber as directed. He saw on the wall, all around, was every creeping thing and loathsome beast. Creeping and crawling bugs and animals, any kind of animal, exactly like Egypt and other nations around Israel worshiped.

There is considerable debate concerning the scene that Ezekiel sees occurring in the temple. Some scholars suggest that the scene is more reminiscent of Egyptian occult practices than Babylonian practices—70 men standing around each holding incense sensors with incense rising up. Since Jerusalem was under Babylonian control, the secrecy of this occult worship may indicate that this was Egyptian occult practice. Babylon would have outlawed Egyptian religious practice as not conforming to Babylonian standards.

Some have suggested that this occult practice was actually being conducted by the leadership of Israel, the Sanhedrin. This may be accurate as Jewish leadership was a council of 70. It would stand to reason that some of the Sanhedrin had been taken into captivity and, therefore, would not be in Jerusalem at this time. This group of 70 men may have been a group of remaining leaders, including some not in the Sanhedrin or perhaps not related to the Sandrine.

Ezekiel does recognize one of the men, Jaazaniah. Jaazaniah was one of four sons to Shaphan, who found the book of the law in the temple during the reign of Josiah. Think about the change that Zaazaniah saw in his lifetime. The reforms to the temple and the worship system, including the clearing out Idols from the temple to being involved in occult worship in the temple himself. This highlights the nation's depravity as God brings to a close the possession of the land by God's chosen people. The rejection of God who brought them out of Egypt and gave the land into their hand, who opened the Red Sea and the Jordon River for them to cross on dry ground. The God who had blessed them and protected them was rejected by false gods who could do nothing for them.

*Ezekiel 8:12–13 (ESV)*

*12 Then he said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of pictures? For they say, ‘The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.’ ” 13 He said also to me, “You will see still greater abominations that they commit.”*

God then asks Ezekiel if he sees what the leadership of Israel is doing in secret in the hidden room of sculptures and idols. Thinking that God does not see them because they are behind closed doors, hidden in the temple. They also believed that God had forsaken them since they had been under siege by the Babylonians. In reality, Israel had not followed God and kept the covenant, the agreement between God and Israel. God had not forsaken them; they had forsaken God.

We also see in these verses that they false god worshiping leaders sought to justify their worship of false gods by saying that God had abandoned them. They needed to worship different gods because Jehovah God had abandoned them. They were courting other gods to find a god who would protect them from the powers around them. The irony of that thought was that they needed to find other gods to protect them from the enemy, which was around them because they had already forsaken Jehovah God and the covenant with Him.

*Ezekiel 8:14–15 (ESV)*

*14 Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD, and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. 15 Then he said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? You will see still greater abominations than these.”*

God then took Ezekiel to the North Gate of the Temple. At the North Gate, Ezekiel saw three women weeping for Tammuz. We know during the nearing of the end of Judah, there was a movement in Judah to merge the religious practices of Israel with those of the pagans around them. The technical term for this is spiritual or religious syncretism. The Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings deals with this practice from many different vantage points. One of these syncretic activities was the worship of Tammuz. Tammuz was the Babylonian god of vegetation. The same as the Sumerian god known as Dumzi or Duzu. Tammuz was the male consort of Ianna or Ishtar, who was known as the shepherd god.

So the scene is this: As Ezekiel looked at the North Gate of the Temple, he saw women crying. It was customary for worshipers of Tammuz to weep and mourn over his death during the spring when seeds were being planted. The teaching was that Tammuz/Dumuzi died each year when planting, only to come back to life at the time of harvest. The timing is off a little as planting typically occurs in the 4th month, taking place on the 6th. But this can be viewed as extra worship since Judah and Jerusalem were basically being waited out without food or the ability to plant and harvest food.

This was another example of pagan worship occurring in Jerusalem in the temple complex. Worshiping a false god in and around the building dedicated to the one true God was an abomination to Jehovah God. God asked Ezekiel if he saw what was happening and then told him that “greater abominations than these you will see.”

*Ezekiel 8:16 (ESV)*

*16 And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD. And behold, at the entrance of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun toward the east.*

God then took Ezekiel into the inner court of the Temple. There God showed Ezekiel a gathering of 25 men between the altar and the temple's porch, standing with their backs to the temple. As these men stood with the temple to their back and their faces toward the east, they worshiped the rising sun.

The inner court was a restricted area that only priests could enter. What a commentary on the depravity of Judah that 25 men, who may have been priests, stood with their backs to God's temple worshipping the sun as it rose in the east. If they were not priests, they were in a restricted place, and non-priests present would have defiled and made it unclean. It should be noted that this description lends credence to the earlier discussion of the idol in the temple being the same as Manessah had placed in the temple as Manasseh also practiced sun worship.

*Ezekiel 8:17 (ESV)*

*17 Then he said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations that they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence and provoke me still further to anger? Behold, they put the branch to their nose.*

Again God calls Ezekiel “son of man” and asks him if he has seen this abomination. The rhetorical question reflects the pain of rejection that God felt through these abominations. The fact that Israel and Judah had turned their backs on God and, as a result, filled the land with violence and corruption pained God. This rhetorical question also shows that God thought this really was a big deal. A situation of significant importance.

The last phrase of verse 17 is interesting and again requires historical context. It is believed that “put a branch to the nose” reflects a cultic practice followed in nations around Israel in their worship of their false gods. It also may be a proverbial expression of turning their nose up at God. Clearly, God was not impressed with the actions of the people of Jerusalem and Judah. They rejected the God who actually had protected and blessed them for inanimate gods who were not real and could not do anything for them.

We should see the importance that God was not just concerned with the lack of worship of God and the worship of false gods. He was also concerned about what the religious perversion had done to the society that was supposed to be different than the rest of the world. God had given instructions to Israel in the 613 laws we find in the Old Testament designed to make the Hebrew society function differently from the rest of the world. God instructed Israel on how to remain clean, treat infections, deal with theft and accidents, and almost every other aspect of society. When the worship of false gods became common practice in Israel, adherence to the laws that regulated society also suffered. Soon theft and violence were commonplace among the people. God laments at the pain and suffering being caused to the people through their turning from God.

*Ezekiel 8:18 (ESV)*

*18 Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.”*

As a result of the examples of idolatry, Ezekiel was shown in and around the temple, and God said He would act in His wrath. The word wrath here is the Hebrew word *בְּחֵמָה* (*bēḥēmâ*) which has a root of heat and anger or hot anger. Because Judah had turned from God, God would punish them, as per their covenant, with a hot anger demanded by God’s justice and righteousness. God was not responding out of anger but was, in fact, keeping His promises to Judah, as both parties had agreed to in the covenant.

## Judgment Announced for the Abominations in the Temple 9:1-11

*Ezekiel 9:1–2 (ESV)*

9 Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, “Bring near the executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.” 2 And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand, and with them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his waist. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

It appears that Ezekiel is still in the Temple in Jerusalem when Ezekiel heard the Lord summon six men who were called “executioners of the city.” Each of the men had some sort of weapon in their hands. Some scholars believe the weapon in their hands is a battle-ax. These men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north. Who or what these men were is of some debate, but I believe this will become more clear in subsequent verses.

The word “executioners” is the Hebrew word פְּקֻדָּה (pqdh Peko ood daw) which is translated as visit, office, custody, numbers, mustering, or punisher, and a variety of other words. This word has caused translators difficulty in this verse and many other verses. The sense of this word is that the men summoned were those who had the authority and the charge to punish the city. This explains why the ESV translates the word as executioners. These men were charged with bringing God’s punishment upon Jerusalem.

From within these six “men” came another “man” clothed in linen. He was not one of the six men but came with them. He is described as wearing linen and having a writing case around his waist. Linen is often used in scripture to refer to priests as it symbolizes purity. The writing case often included an animal’s horn and a palate with slots for pens and a hollow place for ink, often two such ink wells for different ink colors. It was typical for this type of writing kit to be carried by Scribes.

The six executioners and the priestly scribe took up positions by the bronze altar. The Bronze altar was in the temple’s inner court next to the entrance to the actual temple building. It was made of acacia wood and covered in bronze.



## Solomon's Temple

The First Temple, erected by King Solomon, was built to replace the Tabernacle and house the Ark of the Covenant. The Temple was completed in 957 BC after seven years of labor, but it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.

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*Ezekiel 9:3–6 (ESV)*

*3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen,*

*who had the writing case at his waist. 4 And the LORD said to him, "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." 5 And to the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. 6 Kill old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the house.*

Ezekiel next observed the glory of the Lord left the position on the cherubim on the mercy seat, which was the top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, and went to the threshold of the temple.

*Numbers 7:89 (ESV)*

*89 And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and it spoke to him.*

The glory of God, God's visible presence with the people of Israel, often referred to as the Shekinah Glory, was beginning the process of leaving the temple. God was symbolically removing Himself from the temple. Remember that the temple and the tabernacle before it was the place that God symbolically met with the people of Israel. But due to the violation of the covenant with Israel, God was departing the temple. This action is sometimes referred to as Ichabod.

God calls out to the priest/scribe to pass through Jerusalem and mark out those who grieve over the sacrilege and abominations occurring in the temple and Jerusalem. God knew who had remained faithful to Him and who did not. The priest/scribe would mark these faithful on the forehead. What this mark appeared like, we do not know. God also instructed the executioners to go through the city and execute those who did not have the mark on their forehead. They were not to pity anyone; the judgment had already been made; their job was to execute those without the mark. Old folks, young folks, and children, all executed if they did not have the mark.

The final instruction in these verses is for the executioners to begin at the temple and move out from there. Six hundred years later, the apostle Peter would write:

*1 Peter 4:17 (ESV)*

*17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

Judgment was to begin close to where God's Worship was greatest, in the Temple. In our dispensation, judgment is to begin in the church and from there move-out. As Peter says, if Judgment occurs in the church or the temple first, there is no escape for those not involved in the worship of God. In our present case here in Ezekiel, the abomination or disobedience began in the temple, and the punishment should begin next to the temple as well.

Verse 6 closes with the statement, “So they began with the elders who were before the house.” In Ezekiel 8:16, we read:

*Ezekiel 8:16 (ESV)*

*16 And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD. And behold, at the entrance of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, worshiping the sun toward the east.*

It seems logical that these were the first to be executed by these executioners.

*Ezekiel 9:7 (ESV)*

*7 Then he said to them, “Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out.” So they went out and struck in the city.*

The executioners were told to go out and begin the executions. There would be so many close to the temple that the temple courts would be filled entirely and defiled by the bodies piling up. But the temple was already ceremonially unclean by all of the idolatrous events within the temple.

*Ezekiel 9:8 (ESV)*

*8 And while they were striking, and I was left alone, I fell upon my face, and cried, “Ah, Lord GOD! Will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in the outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?”*

The sight of what Ezekiel saw overwhelmed him. He stood there and observed what was happening and could hardly take in the sight. He fell to a position before God of grief and worship. Ezekiel asked God if He was going to destroy all of the remnant of Israel in these executions. Clearly, Ezekiel had a heart for his people, and I think compassion for the situation in which God was executing His chosen people. It seems that Ezekiel was overwhelmed for the people but also by the pain this caused God.

The question that Ezekiel asks concerns “the remnant” of Israel.

*Genesis 45:7 (ESV)*

*7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.*

Beginning with Noah, God always works to preserve a remnant of people on the earth who worship Him and be obedient to Him.

*Deuteronomy 4:27–31 (ESV)*

*27 And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. 28 And there you*

*will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. 29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice. 31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.*

Even when punishment would come upon Israel, He vowed to protect a remnant while Israel was dispersed throughout the world. Ezekiel would have known this and was asking God a question we all have asked of God. “Are you changing your mind on this?” To Ezekiel, it appeared God’s wrath would remove from Israel every Jew, and there would be no chosen people to carry on. Was God altering His plan for Israel?

*Ezekiel 9:9–10 (ESV)*

*9 Then he said to me, “The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice. For they say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.’ 10 As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will bring their deeds upon their heads.”*

God responded to Ezekiel’s question. God says that the guilt of both Judah, the two southern tribes, and Israel, the ten northern tribes, is great. The promised land had been filled with blood, indicating the violence of the people of Israel had resulted in a great deal of bloodshed and loss of life and then added to that the execution of all these people, as seen in this chapter. The people of Judah and Israel had rejected the leadership of God and become a people that took advantage of others, stealing from them, robbing them, and killing them. It got to the point that the people thought God had completely forsaken the land.

Go continued that His punishment will be complete He will not spare anyone that is to be punished. God’s justice demands that His punishment be complete on all those marked out for punishment. Since the angels had gone out and marked the population already, they would be punished; there was no changing that.

*Ezekiel 9:11 (ESV)*

*11 And behold, the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his waist, brought back word, saying, “I have done as you commanded me.”*

Ezekiel then sees the priest/scribe return and report to God that he had done as directed. Those righteous and grieved over the situation occurring in Jerusalem and the temple were marked; all the rest were executed.

As chapter 9 draws to a close, the question the Bible student must answer is, “when do these things Ezekiel witnesses take place?” What we do know is as Ezekiel is transported to the temple by God, it is 592 BC, based upon:

*Ezekiel 8:1 (ESV)*

*8 In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there.*

By this time, many in Jerusalem were dying from starvation and disease. But Jerusalem would not be completely taken until 586 BC. When Babylon would finally break through the walls, many more would be slaughtered in the assault. We can turn to 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36 to see a possible historical fulfillment of what Ezekiel saw:

*2 Chronicles 36:17–19 (ESV)*

*17 Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. 19 And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.*

If this passage is what Ezekiel saw, it is clear that Ezekiel saw it from the spiritual world side and not the physical world side. The six angels or executioners were representative of the Babylonian forces. We do know that God used Nebuchadnezzar to effect the punishment on Israel.

*Habakkuk 1:5–11 (ESV)*

*The LORD's Answer*

5     *“Look among the nations, and see;  
wonder and be astounded.*

*For I am doing a work in your days  
that you would not believe if told.*

6     *For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,  
that bitter and hasty nation,*

*who march through the breadth of the earth,  
to seize dwellings not their own.*

7     *They are dreaded and fearsome;  
their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.*

8     *Their horses are swifter than leopards,*

*more fierce than the evening wolves;  
their horsemen press proudly on.*

*Their horsemen come from afar;  
they fly like an eagle swift to devour.*

9 *They all come for violence,  
all their faces forward.*

*They gather captives like sand.*

10 *At kings they scoff,  
and at rulers they laugh.*

*They laugh at every fortress,  
for they pile up earth and take it.*

11 *Then they sweep by like the wind and go on,  
guilty men, whose own might is their god!”*

*Jeremiah 25:11–12 (ESV)*

*11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.*

God reveals to Ezekiel the spiritual mission carried out by Babylon, which was the punishment of Israel and Judah for failing to live up to the covenant agreed to.

## [The Lord Leaves the Temple 10:1-11:25](#)

Chapter 10 of Ezekiel can be neatly divided into two sections, beginning with the same words: “I Looked” in 10:1 and 10:9.

*Ezekiel 10:1 (ESV)*

*10 Then I looked, and behold, on the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in appearance like a throne.*

*Ezekiel 10:9 (ESV)*

*9 And I looked, and behold, there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub, and the appearance of the wheels was like sparkling beryl.*

The first section, 10:1-8, retells the events recorded in 9:1-11, while 10:9-22 retells the appearance of God in Ezekiel 1:6-21.

*Ezekiel 10:1–2 (ESV)*

*10 Then I looked, and behold, on the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in appearance like a throne. 2 And he said to the man clothed in linen, “Go in among the whirling wheels underneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city.”*

*And he went in before my eyes.*

God had said He would not share his home with other gods. All the idol worship had polluted the temple, and foreign gods were placed into and around the temple. Ezekiel is still standing close to the altar in the temple courtyard. Ezekiel sees God’s throne of sapphires on the chariot throne we were introduced to in chapter 1.

Ezekiel watched as God commanded the priest/scribe from chapter 9 to take burning coals down among the turning wheels and scatter them over the city. There is some debate among scholars whether this was an act of purification or an act of judgment. I think it is simply an act of both purifications while at the same time punishing the people of Jerusalem.

This event may have been recorded in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings:

*2 Kings 25:8–9 (ESV)*

*8 In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9 And he burned the house of the LORD and the king’s house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down.*

*Ezekiel 10:3–5 (ESV)*

*3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house, when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 And the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. 5 And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.*

Ezekiel now describes seeing the glory of God in the temple. In verse three, the “man” we see here was introduced to us in chapter nine, verse two. We saw he was an angel assigned by God to the judgment of Jerusalem. Here in verse three, we see the man enter the temple from the

southside. As the man entered the temple, a cloud filled the inner court of the temple. This indicates that God was present, and His glory filled the temple.

Ezekiel then repeats that he saw the glory of God move from the chariot throne to the threshold of the temple. God's glory shined bright and filled the temple with bright light. The cloud was pierced by the bright lights of God's glory. Ezekiel again heard the sound of the wings of the cherubs as he stood in the courtyard.

*Ezekiel 10:6–8 (ESV)*

*6 And when he commanded the man clothed in linen, "Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim," he went in and stood beside a wheel. 7 And a cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire that was between the cherubim, and took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and went out. 8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings.*

God then commands the priest/scribe described as "the man" to take a coal from between the spinning wheels of the chariot throne of God. The priest/scribe stood next to the wheels, where a cherub gave him some coals. The priest/scribe then left from between the wheels. Ezekiel describes the cherub as having the form of a human hand under his wings.

The action of taking the coal by the priest/scribe from the cherub symbolizes the divine punishment and purification of Jerusalem. Ezekiel does not record that the priest/scribe went out and delivered the coals over Jerusalem in this verse, but we were told earlier that he had delivered the coals to Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 10:9–14 (ESV)*

*9 And I looked, and behold, there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub, and the appearance of the wheels was like sparkling beryl. 10 And as for their appearance, the four had the same likeness, as if a wheel were within a wheel. 11 When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went, but in whatever direction the front wheel faced, the others followed without turning as they went. 12 And their whole body, their rims, and their spokes, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around—the wheels that the four of them had. 13 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing "the whirling wheels." 14 And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was a human face, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.*

Ezekiel again describes the wheels beside the Churebim, one wheel beside each cherub. The



wheels are described as having the appearance of sparkling beryl. Beryl is described as a mineral composed of beryllium aluminum cyclosilicate. It appears as emerald green and aquamarine. It is a crystal that forms octagon shapes, which then refracts lights to make a sparkling appearance. The wheels are



described as a wheel within a wheel with the ability to move in any direction without turning. The wheels moved in unison with each other in multiple directions.

Ezekiel also describes that the Cherubs, their wings, and the wheels were covered with eyes. Ezekiel 1:18, Ezekiel mentions the eyes being on the wheels but does not describe the cherubs with eyes as he does here in chapter 10. The symbolism of eyes has been used several times in the Old Testament to reflect God's ability to see and know everything.

*Zechariah 4:10 (ESV)*

*10 For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.*

*“These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.”*

*2 Chronicles 16:9 (ESV)*

*9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars.”*

Ezekiel also reports that he heard the wheels referred to as “whirling wheels,” which indicates that wheels revolved, perhaps even very fast. It appears that Ezekiel provides this information is to prepare for the coming departure of the chariot throne of God from the temple complex.

Ezekiel also gives us another description of the cherubim. He describes them as having four faces. The face of a cherub, a man, a lion, and an eagle. Some scholars have argued that scribes, in copying the original text of Ezekiel, mistakenly omitted the face of an ox and put the face of a cherub in its place. However, in Akkadian literature, “kuribu” the Akkadian form of cherub have nonhuman faces. In Ezekiel 1:10, the faces were of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. The New American Commentary states the following concerning the differences in the appearance of the cherubim in chapter one and chapter ten:

*The difference in the identity of the four faces is one for which there is no conclusive explanation. In 1:10 the faces were those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. In 10:14 the ox face is replaced by that of a cherub, which is listed first. One of Ezekiel’s observations about the creatures in the first vision, their legs/feet being like those of a calf, also is not found in chap. 10. Nevertheless, chap. 10 makes clear that the creatures in the two visions were the same. Rabbinic interpreters explained that the ox face was removed at Ezekiel’s request because he associated it with the golden calf of Exod 32. H. Parunak, however, suggests that in the vision shown to Ezekiel by the Kebar River the cherubim took the form of the Mesopotamian winged bull rather than the winged lion more common in the west Semitic world. “The substitution of an ox-cherub for the expected sphinx-cherub may be one more way of emphasizing that though the Lord has sent his people into captivity, he follows them there—even adopting*

*Mesopotamian motifs for his chariot!’ In chap. 10 the concern is rather to connect the vision with the motifs of the temple.<sup>21</sup>*

Ezekiel then describes the movement of the chariot throne.

*Ezekiel 10:15–17 (ESV)*

*15 And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the Chebar canal. 16 And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them. And when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels did not turn from beside them. 17 When they stood still, these stood still, and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in them.*

The cherubim began to move up, which brings God’s throne on the chariot to rise from the temple complex into the air. God’s glory, which had been standing at the entrance to the temple, departed the threshold. We know from the next section that the glory of God departed the threshold and stood over the cherubim. The wheels went with the cherubim. While on the ground, the wheels turned, when off the ground, the wheels stopped.

Ezekiel is describing the readying of the chariot throne for God to leave the temple again.

*Ezekiel 10:18–19 (ESV)*

*18 Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. 19 And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them. And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.*

God’s glory left the doorway to the temple and stood over the cherubim. The cherubim then began to fly and carry the chariot throne from the earth. The chariot throne came to rest over the east gate of the temple. This was the entrance of the temple facing the Kidron valley and the Mount of Olives.

*Ezekiel 10:20–22 (ESV)*

*20 These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the Chebar canal; and I knew that they were cherubim. 21 Each had four faces, and each four wings, and underneath their wings the likeness of human hands. 22 And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the Chebar canal. Each one of them went straight forward.*

Ezekiel now identifies the cherubs as being the same ones he saw and recorded in chapter one. He describes them as having four faces, four wings, with human hands below their wings. He

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<sup>21</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 133–134.

further describes their faces as the same faces as he recorded in chapter one. He describes their movement as straightforward. This would indicate that each of the cherubs was facing a different direction, which enabled the group to go in any direction.

*Ezekiel 11:1–4 (ESV)*

*11 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the LORD, which faces east. And behold, at the entrance of the gateway there were twenty-five men. And I saw among them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2 And he said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; 3 who say, ‘The time is not near to build houses. This city is the cauldron, and we are the meat.’ 4 Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, O son of man.”*

We should recall that the Spirit of God carried Ezekiel to the temple complex from Babylon. Here in verse 1 the Spirit of God carried Ezekiel to the east gate of the temple. Ezekiel sees twenty-five men at the temple's East gate, not believed to be the same twenty-five men seen in 8:16. Ezekiel also sees Jaazaniah, the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah, the son of Benaiah, who he describes as princes of the people. We have no other scripture information concerning these men other than serving in some form of leadership in Jerusalem. We also know that their names were found among the names found on over 250 bullae, which are clay seals used on official documents, uncovered in archeological excavations in Jerusalem. In addition to these two names, Jeremiah and Baruch, his scribe, were also found in the bullae.

Ezekiel was told that these men were “devised iniquity” and giving “gave wicked counsel” in Jerusalem. As leaders in the city of Jerusalem, they were responsible for the moral, social, and spiritual direction the people of Jerusalem and Israel went in. In verse three, we see that some of the bad advice seemed to center on the idea that the Babylonian captivity would end soon and prosperity in Israel would return. God had told them their captivity would last 70 years, not just a few. There was always the thought that God would never really remove the Jews from the land since they were His chosen people. That advice was given frequently to leaders in Israel, who caused Israel to fall deep into conflict.

God gave Ezekiel an instruction to prophesy against the people that had led Israel astray. We see again that God calls Ezekiel “son of man.” The use of prophecy twice in the command indicates that God gave this command with some urgency.

*Ezekiel 11:5–6 (ESV)*

*5 And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, “Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind. 6 You have multiplied your slain in this city and have filled its streets with the slain.*

God knew what the leadership left in Jerusalem was thinking. He knew what had come into their mind. He then says that the result of their thought process was or would be the death of many

people. So many people would die in and around Jerusalem that the streets would be filled with corpses.

*Ezekiel 11:7–8 (ESV)*

*7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of it, they are the meat, and this city is the cauldron, but you shall be brought out of the midst of it. 8 You have feared the sword, and I will bring the sword upon you, declares the Lord GOD.*

We see an analogy for the second time in this passage. The analogy of a crockpot and the meat within it being cooked. The leadership of Jerusalem would not be protecting the people but would, in fact, be turning up the heat on them, leading them in the wrong direction. God says He will bring the sword upon them.

*Ezekiel 11:9–10 (ESV)*

*9 And I will bring you out of the midst of it, and give you into the hands of foreigners, and execute judgments upon you. 10 You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel, and you shall know that I am the LORD.*

God will then deliver Israel and Jerusalem out of the conflict into the hand of the enemy, where His judgment will be upon them. God also says that he will judge them all over the land. It is through this judgment that they will recognize that He is the Jehovah God.

The people of Israel had entered into a contract with God that mandated they worship Him or face being removed from the land. They had stopped worshipping God and had even brought false gods into the temple. Judgment was there, and as a result of the judgment, the people of Israel will know that He is God.

*Ezekiel 11:11–12 (ESV)*

*11 This city shall not be your cauldron, nor shall you be the meat in the midst of it. I will judge you at the border of Israel, 12 and you shall know that I am the LORD. For you have not walked in my statutes, nor obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you.”*

Living in the city would not be a protection for them. Again the idea that God would never let Jerusalem go was an idea that prevailed in Jerusalem. They thought that God would let Israel get away with anything and not actually exile them from at least the city of Jerusalem. It would not be protection for them.

God will keep His word, and the people of Israel and Jerusalem will know that He is God and will keep His word. God then reminds the people of why they are being killed in the streets and taken into exile. They were not obedient to Him; they did not live by the rules He had given them. In fact, they lived like the pagan nations around them.

*Ezekiel 11:13 (ESV)*

*13 And it came to pass, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?”*

As Ezekiel was giving the Word of God to the people, Pelatiah, the son of Benaiah, died. Pelatiah was one of two leaders mentioned in 11:1. Ezekiel mourned the death of Pelatiah. As I study this passage, I don't see that Ezekiel was mourning over the man as much as mourning over the realization that judgment was really here and was in full force. Ezekiel then asked God if He would completely eliminate the remnant of Israel. Ezekiel asked the same question in 9:8. This sentiment makes sense in the context of seeing and hearing the destruction in Jerusalem. It seems like Ezekiel knew God had promised that there would always be a remnant, but in the heat of the moment, Ezekiel's knowledge was overwhelmed by emotion.

*Ezekiel 11:14–17 (ESV)*

*14 And the word of the LORD came to me: 15 “Son of man, your brothers, even your brothers, your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far from the LORD; to us this land is given for a possession.’ 16 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.’ 17 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’*

God again spoke to Ezekiel and tells him that all of his family, the people of Israel, had voiced a departure from God. As a result of this, Ezekiel, you tell them that Israel will be removed from the world as a nation of people. They will be scattered to other countries. No longer will Jerusalem be a sanctuary for the people, a place of refuge. But at some point, God would gather the people of Israel together out of the foreign countries back into the land of Israel. This is a yet future event that we know through the other scripture will occur during the seven-year tribulation and be gathered entirely for the Millennial Kingdom.

Of course, we know that a remnant returned to Jerusalem and Israel after the Babylonian captivity. A remnant remained in and around Israel when General Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70ad and then took Masada in 72ad. Israel itself did not exist until 1948, 1900 years later. But the Israel of today is not a people following Jehovah God and worship the Messiah. That will come at the conclusion of the tribulation.

*Ezekiel 11:18–19 (ESV)*

*18 And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. 19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,*

God continues by describing what will happen when the Jews are brought back. Israel will remove all the false gods and things that make everything unclean from their presence. The people will be given a unified heart that will replace the hardened heart of stone. They will be given a heart of flesh. This seems to indicate that Israel will receive the Holy Spirit as Jeremiah recorded in Jer 31:31-34.

*Ezekiel 11:20–21 (ESV)*

*20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21 But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord GOD.”*

## False Prophets 12:1-15:8

Ezekiel’s focus returns to the false prophets among the Israelites and the coming exile Israel would face because they failed to be obedient to God and to keep the covenant that was in force between God and Israel.

## Signs for the Coming Exile 12:1-20

*Ezekiel 12:1–2 (ESV)*

*12 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house.*

God again addresses Ezekiel as “Son of Man.” We should remember that “Son of Man,” as used in Ezekiel, distinguishes Ezekiel from God and Ezekiel as the representative of man before God. In Daniel, “Son of Man” becomes a reference to the Messiah, again with the idea that He represents God of man.

In verse 1, Ezekiel states that the Word of the Lord came to him. The sinfulness of Israel had blinded them to their own actions. God tells Ezekiel that his mission is difficult since he is living among rebellious people and not very responsive to the warnings Ezekiel was giving them from God. He would warn them, but there was very little response from the people. We saw in the last section that the prophets in Jerusalem were rebellious and not giving to the people truth from God. The people were equally rebellious. God says that the people are rebellious with eyes to see and ears to hear, but they don’t understand what they see and hear. There is a sense that the people of Israel had chosen to ignore the truth and the reality of the warning given to them.

*Ezekiel 12:3–4 (ESV)*

*3 As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile’s baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight. You shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious*

*house. 4 You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile, and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who must go into exile.*

Ezekiel was already in exile in Babylon, having been carried out by the early forces against Jerusalem. But God wants Ezekiel to demonstrate through his life an illustration of rebellious people. God tells Ezekiel to pack an exile's bag. An exile's bag is a small bag that carries only the essentials, water, sleeping matt, and perhaps a bowl for food. God instructed Ezekiel to take his exile's bag and travel in the sight of the people from one place to another. Every night he was to go out by himself like he was going into exile.

*Ezekiel 12:5–7 (ESV)*

*5 In their sight dig through the wall, and bring your baggage out through it. 6 In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out at dusk. You shall cover your face that you may not see the land, for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.”*

*7 And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands. I brought out my baggage at dusk, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight.*

Ezekiel was to go through the wall of his house and climb through the hole with his bag at dusk. He was to do this with his face covered. Then he was to walk away from the area. He was to do this during the night, which suggests that it will be a time of spiritual darkness when Israel is taken captive.

Some scholars suggest that Ezekiel being told to dig a hole in the wall to his house and act like an exile leaving is availed reference to the attempt of Zedekiah to flee the approaching Babylonian army by slipping through a hole in the city walls of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:4-7)

Verse 7 reflects that Ezekiel did as God instructed him. He brought out his baggage by day, and in the evening, he dug through the wall and exited the house. He simulated the exile leaving from the security of his home in flight from the approaching enemies.

*Ezekiel 12:8–10 (ESV)*

*8 In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: 9 “Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, ‘What are you doing?’ 10 Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it.’*

Again the word of God came to Ezekiel. God then asks Ezekiel if the people of Israel have asked him what he was doing. God then gives Ezekiel the response he is to give to the question that has been asked and undoubtedly will be asked again. Ezekiel is to respond with, “Thus says the Lord!” he is, to begin with, the emphatic statement that what comes next is directly from God. Then he is to explain that what is coming concerns the king and the Jewish leadership.

It seems that the message of this little drama directed by God was to convey the idea that the Jewish leadership was trying to escape responsibility and culpability in the fact that Israel did not obey the covenant with God. The Jewish leadership was attempting to protect themselves and not get caught by the Babylonians. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25, we see that very thing happen as King Zedekiah and his officers escape through a hole in the wall. But they were caught. Babylon then captured the king's sons in front of the king. They then plucked out the king's eyes, leaving him blind.

*Ezekiel 12:11–12 (ESV)*

*11 Say, 'I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them. They shall go into exile, into captivity.' 12 And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder at dusk, and shall go out. They shall dig through the wall to bring him out through it. He shall cover his face, that he may not see the land with his eyes.*

Ezekiel was to remind the exiles that what he was doing was a sign for them, an illustration. God was reminding them why they were in captivity. God refers to Zedekiah as the “prince” rather than king since Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah in place of Jehoiachin, who was the legitimate king. (2 Kings 25:17-20) The illustration of covering the face seems to reflect the fact that Babylon blinded Zedekiah.

*Ezekiel 12:13–16 (ESV)*

*13 And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there. 14 And I will scatter toward every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops, and I will unsheathe the sword after them. 15 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries. 16 But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the LORD.”*

As Zedekiah attempts to escape Israel, he is captured and taken to Babylon, but not before being blinded. Here in verse 13, Ezekiel reflects the word of God in which God says that He will bring Zedekiah to Babylon, but Zedekiah will not see Babylon but will die there. God then says that He will scatter all who are around him and his helpers.

The end result of this drama portrayed by Ezekiel and the actions of God is a large diaspora of Jews through many countries. Many will die at the hands of Babylon, but some will be spared from famine and the sword. God will protect and preserve the remnant of Israel. All of this to reveal to the world that He is Lord and that they will know it.

*Ezekiel 12:17–20 (ESV)*

*17 And the word of the LORD came to me: 18 “Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink water with trembling and with anxiety. 19 And say to the*

*people of the land, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink water in dismay. In this way her land will be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it. 20 And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD.”*

God then directs Ezekiel to play out another little drama. Ezekiel was to eat his bread with quaking and drink his water with trembling and anxiety. This was to be an illustration of the fear and anxiety inherent in the exile. They had to eat their meager rations, not knowing where the next meal might come from.

The New American Commentary on Ezekiel presents an interesting argument for this passage. I quote it in full to properly report the argument.

*Brownlee has argued that Ezekiel was presenting a reversal of Joshua’s seven stages in the conquest of Canaan by presenting seven stages in the loss of the land. Joshua’s stages included invading the land (Josh 3–4), laying siege to Jericho (Josh 6:1–14), the celebration at Gilgal (Josh 5:10–12), the panic of the Canaanites (Josh 5:1), the destruction of the Canaanites (Josh 8–11), the rejoicing of Israel (Josh 10:22–27), and Israel’s possessing the land (Josh 11:23; 1 Kgs 8:56). Contrast this with Ezekiel’s inclusion of a settled people fleeing (Ezek 12:1–14, 19b–20), Israel under siege in Jerusalem (4:1–3), Israel starved in Jerusalem (4:9–16; 5:10), Israel panicked (4:16; 7:26–27; 12:17–19a), Israel destroyed and expelled from the land (5:1–12), Israel’s enemies rejoicing (6:11–12), and decadence ending with the loss of the land (7:1–9).*

*The moral depravity and decadence of Israel had led to the fall of the capital of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria, in 722 B.C. That example of the consequences of sin did not deter Judah. Those under sin’s power often mistakenly conclude that though sin destroys others, they will not be affected (12:3–20; see 2 Sam 12:10–12, where the consequences of David’s sin were foretold).<sup>22</sup>*

This is an interesting argument and in keeping with the way God works and records our history.

## Two False Proverbs 12:21-28

Following these two little dramas by Ezekiel, God directs Ezekiel through a series of five messages (12:21-14:23) to destroy the people’s false sense of optimism and to show the certainty of God’s judgment. The first of these five messages deals with two popular proverbs of the day in Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 12:21–22 (ESV)*

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<sup>22</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 151.

*21 And the word of the LORD came to me: 22 “Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, ‘The days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing’?*

The proverb was, “the days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing.” The point of this proverb was that the prophecies from Israel’s various prophets that predicted doom on Israel would not come to pass. The proverb was a way of just labeling the prophets as guys that speak bad things rather than convey the Word of God. The proverb was very dismissive of God’s prophets.

*Ezekiel 12:23–25 (ESV)*

*23 Tell them therefore, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.’ But say to them, ‘The days are near, and the fulfillment of every vision. 24 For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25 For I am the LORD; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord GOD.’*

God directs Ezekiel to tell the people, “Thus says the Lord God, I will put an end to this proverb.” God was going to punish Israel, making the proverb null and void. No longer will people be able to say legitimately that God’s prophets are just doomsayers. God says that He will end the idea that punishment will not be coming. No longer is He going to tolerate prophets who do not speak His word properly. He further says that what He has declared will be what actually happens. He has declared Israel in violation of the covenant with Him, and as a result, they will be sent to exile. There is no longer any time to escape it.

*Ezekiel 12:26–28 (ESV)*

*26 And the word of the LORD came to me: 27 “Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, ‘The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.’ 28 Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord GOD.”*

The second proverb was: “the vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.” Basically, the proverb was that the prophecies of doom coming on Israel are not relevant for Israel right then but for a long time off in the future. This was along held belief in Israel that since they were God’s chosen doom would not come or if it will come, it would be a long time from then, certainly not for the people of Israel in that day.

God’s response to this is that His words will not be delayed any longer. The punishment due for a violation of the covenant will happen, and it will happen right then. Israel’s time is over, and punishment is there. What God says will happen actually will happen.

## Condemnation of False Prophets 13:1-23

God takes a very dim view of Prophets, who are supposed to proclaim God's Word to the people when they speak false words to the people. Chapter 13 deals with the charges being made against these prophets and the consequences of their actions.

*Ezekiel 13:1–2 (ESV)*

*13 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: ‘Hear the word of the LORD!’”*

Again the section begins with the declaration that God provided His Word to Ezekiel, again identified as the son of man. God tells Ezekiel to prophesy against the prophets of Israel. We need to remember that “prophesy” does not specifically mean to predict the future but rather to speak out. The Hebrew word *הִנָּבֵא* (hinnave) comes from the idea of bubble up. I love this; God caused Ezekiel to “bubble up” with the information He wanted to give the Hebrews.

Ezekiel's words to bubble up were directed at the prophets of Israel who were not giving God's Word but their own words, from their own hearts. God told Ezekiel to tell them to “hear the word of the LORD.”

*Ezekiel 13:3 (ESV)*

*3 Thus says the Lord GOD, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!*

Ezekiel continues by pronouncing “woe” to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have not had anything revealed to them by God. There appears to be a play on words in the Hebrew text, which basically translates as prophetess prophets. Prophets who are supposed to speak the Word of God were speaking without hearing the Word of God

*Ezekiel 13:4 (ESV)*

*4 Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel.*

There are many ways that Bible Scholars interpret the reference to jackals. The Hebrew word translated as Jackals is *כְּשִׁלְיִם* (kš'lym) is translated both as jackal and as fox. This is not the normal word used for jackal. This leads many scholars to conclude the intended picture is the fox, who was seen as a scavenger or an animal that would adapt the homes of other animals to themselves. It was not uncommon to find fox dens being made in the ruins of old buildings.

The prophets were not concerned about Israel or the Word of God. The prophets were only focused on their own lives and their personal wealth. They could not speak woe to Israel because of the fear they would be rejected and even killed. They were not concerned about Israel at all.

*Ezekiel 13:5–7 (ESV)*

*5 You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the LORD. 6 They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the LORD,' when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. 7 Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, 'Declares the LORD,' although I have not spoken?"*

The prophets had done nothing to help protect Israel and Jerusalem. They had done nothing to rebuild or repair the walls. They simply just kept telling the people that everything was going to be alright.

There is an interesting statement at the end of verse 5. "that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord." It would seem that this is a reference to the yet future tribulation and Millennium period. Clearly, we know that more than 2500 years have passed since God proclaimed to Ezekiel these words. Therefore God could not have been speaking only of repairing walls but of developing the people to follow God, which Israel will do during the period of the "day of the Lord." As leaders of the people who were to bring to the people the Word of God, the prophets were responsible, along with the priests, for the spiritual well-being of Israel. But these prophets referenced here had failed the people and had failed God. There will be consequences to this failure.

God accuses these prophets of presenting false visions and out and out lying. God then says that after these prophets lie about what God will do, they expect God to comply with their lie. The prophets told Israel that God would always protect them and never be expelled from the land. These prophets then expected that God would live up to the lies. They thought they could say whatever they wanted, and God was then obligated in some way to do what they said. They should know that they can never compel God to do something He was not predisposed to do.

*Ezekiel 13:8–9 (ESV)*

*8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions, therefore behold, I am against you, declares the Lord GOD. 9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.*

The next thing that God tells Ezekiel is a declaration against these false prophets. God said that since these false prophets have told the Israelites lies, He was therefore against them. God says that His hand will be against the prophets, and they will no longer be in the council of His people. No longer will there be prophets in leadership in Israel. They will no longer enjoy the position of leadership and prominence among the people. God also tells these prophets that they will no longer be citizens of Israel. Not being enrolled in the register of the house of Israel means they have had their citizenship removed, and they would be excommunicated from the religious system of Israel.

*Ezra 2:62 (ESV)*

*62 These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.*

In today's parlance, we would say they had been defrocked.

This action would have very significant action on the lives of these prophets. Since they were in Babylon with Ezekiel and had their citizenship removed, they would never return to Israel. They would remain exiles for the rest of their lives—quite a punishment for any Jew.

*Ezekiel 13:10–12 (ESV)*

*10 Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash, 11 say to those who smear it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, and you, O great hailstones, will fall, and a stormy wind break out. 12 And when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the coating with which you smeared it?'*

Ezekiel had been telling the people that the destruction of Jerusalem was coming, but these false prophets were saying no destruction, and there would be peace. Rather than do their job of proclaiming God's word to the people, which predicted destruction and captivity, the false prophets made an argument for peace. In effect, they took the flimsy wall of Jerusalem and made it look good by painting it but not fixing it. God has all the power of nature to destroy the walls that will not hold. God was not going to be held hostage by the false promises of these prophets.

*Ezekiel 13:13–16 (ESV)*

*13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath, and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to make a full end. 14 And I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 15 Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash, and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it, 16 the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord GOD.*

We have learned in our study that sometimes, especially in prophetic works, we find allegorical statements meant to paint a certain picture. In this case, God is painting a picture of a wall surround Israel, or at least Jerusalem, that was weak and failing and which the false prophets did not repair. The false prophets simply painted it to make it look better than it was. Was this a real physical wall? No, they were already in Babylon, so a wall could not be material. It was allegorical, just as the image of God's destroying it through the weather. This is intended to show

that God was the one that would be one destroying or bringing punishment upon these false prophets.

*Ezekiel 13:17–19 (ESV)*

*17 “And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own hearts. Prophecy against them 18 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in the hunt for souls! Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people and keep your own souls alive? 19 You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death souls who should not die and keeping alive souls who should not live, by your lying to my people, who listen to lies.*

God now turns from the false prophets to the false prophetesses. God called them “daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own hearts.” Again the problem is these women are prophesying their own thoughts and hearts and not listening to what God has said or, in many cases, not even asking God.

Ezekiel was to prophesy against these women and tell them what God had said about them. Again woe is pronounced against the women, which should be interpreted as a threat. Apparently, these women had sewn “magic bands” around their wrists. These women had adopted some of the Babylonian mystical or magical trinkets to their own use. It was common for the Babylonians to have bracelets tied with different threads and knots, which supposedly provided some sort of protection from evil spirits. No other place in the Old Testament are these magical bands spoken of. The veils were very long to the floor and covered the prophetess from head to toe. Very much like the burqa that very conservative Islam requires. It is believed that the veils provided the prophetess with a sense of mystery. Again this was an adaptation of Babylonian mysticism and not teaching from God.

The purpose of these magic bands and veils was to ensnare people into following them and providing for them. Israelites went to these fortune tellers so the fortune-tellers could provide them with good news and ward off anything bad from happening to them. The fortune-tellers made their living by making people feel like things were going to be alright.

God said that their actions had profaned Him among the people of Israel for small payments of bread and flour by lying to the people. In effect, these false prophets have protected the guilty and have violated the innocent. They got it all backward in lying to the people.

*Ezekiel 13:20–21 (ESV)*

*20 “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against your magic bands with which you hunt the souls like birds, and I will tear them from your arms, and I will let the souls whom you hunt go free, the souls like birds. 21 Your veils also I will tear off and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand as prey, and you shall know that I am the LORD.*

God says that He is against the magic bands that they use to hunt for people's souls in His anger. God says that He will tear the bands from their arms and free the souls they have captured. God will destroy this false religious system and will release those they have snared. How we interpret “let the souls you hunt go free” is a little difficult. In keeping with the context, I think it best to view this statement that God will rescue His people from the snare of these false prophets and false prophetesses. I don't think it is a specific statement concerning the people led astray by the false prophets but a more generic statement relating to Israel. This will take place when the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 takes place.

*Ezekiel 13:22–23 (ESV)*

*22 Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life, 23 therefore you shall no more see false visions nor practice divination. I will deliver my people out of your hand. And you shall know that I am the LORD.”*

Because the false prophets have led the people astray and even encouraged people not to follow God and His commands, they have placed themselves in direct opposition to God's commands. Rather than working for God, they are working against God. When these false prophets and prophetesses are judged, Israel will realize how far astray they have been led. The end result of the punishment will be that Israel knows that God is sovereign. He alone is God. Of course, this will occur at the end of the tribulation when Israel is made ready for the Messiah.

### Consulting a Prophet 14:1-11

*Ezekiel 14:1 (ESV)*

*14 Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me.*

The brevity of this verse, which sets the stage for this next interaction, assumes the reader remembers some information previously given. In chapter 3, we learned that Ezekiel is confined to his home.

*Ezekiel 3:24 (ESV)*

*24 But the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, “Go, shut yourself within your house.*

He is still confined there. In chapter 8, we discover that the Jewish leadership recognizes Ezekiel as a prophet.

*Ezekiel 8:1 (ESV)*

*8 In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there.*

So apparently, they were coming to him again to seek instructions from the prophets. Presumably, the elders believed they could receive a message from God through Ezekiel.

*Ezekiel 14:2–3 (ESV)*

*2 And the word of the LORD came to me: 3 “Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them?”*

Again we see that what Ezekiel will give to the elders is from God, the Word of the Lord. We also see that Ezekiel is again called the “son of man.” What God tells Ezekiel is very clear. God tells Ezekiel that “these men” have taken their idols into their hearts and set a stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. A good Bible student has first to determine who “these men” is a reference to.

The immediate context would indicate that “these men” refers to the elders of Israel who had come to Ezekiel for direction. But I also think that “these men” includes all the leaders of Israel, not just the exiled elders that lived near the Chebar canal in Babylon. God is bringing an indictment against all of the leaders of Israel.

The leadership of Israel had failed to protect the people of Israel and had failed to lead the nation in following God properly. In fact, the leadership had led Israel away from God and not closer to God. The idols that the leadership had set up became real stumbling blocks for the people to get past. Worship of idols and false gods had created extensive idolatry and idolatrous practices in Israel that even included sacrificing children to these false gods.

*Ezekiel 14:4–5 (ESV)*

*4 Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols, 5 that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols.*

God directs Ezekiel to respond to the elders: “Thus says the Lord...” If I were one of those elders, I would be on the edge of my seat and very afraid about what was coming. I would be in a panic, especially in knowing that I had failed in my job to lead the people of Israel in following God but in actually leading them away from God. Then to have God speak, I would be in a panic.

Think about the hypocrisy that these elders were displaying in coming to Ezekiel to receive direction from God. They had worshiped false gods but now were coming to the God they did not worship for direction. They had led people away from God but now were turning to Him for direction. God responds that He will answer these leaders who have followed other gods. He will answer them in a desire to “lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel.” Even though these

leaders and the people of Israel were estranged from God because of idolatry, He would still respond to them.

*Ezekiel 14:6–11 (ESV)*

*6 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7 For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him, I the LORD will answer him myself. 8 And I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 9 And if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10 And they shall bear their punishment—the punishment of the prophet and the punishment of the inquirer shall be alike— 11 that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, declares the Lord GOD.”*

God then told Ezekiel to say to the house of Israel that He would respond to anyone who has followed idols but still comes to the prophet to hear from God. God says I will answer him myself by turning from him, making an example out of him, and cutting him off from the nation. Anybody that thinks they can worship false gods and yet, in the time of time, cry out to the one true God will quickly discover that God will not permit that. God will not tolerate any Israelite that worships a false god but turns to the one true God in the time of need. Kind of like having your cake and eating it too. God will send that person to premature death.

God also said that God would also destroy the prophet if the prophet sought to inquire on behalf of the idolatrous leaders. In effect the prophet would have made himself an idolater as well. A leading Old Testament scholar who specializes in the prophet Ezekiel, Dr. Ian Duguid, states:

*If the people refuse to listen to God’s prophets who tell them the truth, the Lord will bring judgment on the people by giving them lying prophets, who will tell them what they want to hear. God’s action in giving the prophet a deceitful oracle is nothing other than giving him and hearers what they have sought.<sup>23</sup>*

It was not unjust of God to send a deceptive spirit to the prophet. In James we read.”

*James 1:14 (ESV)*

*14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.*

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<sup>23</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ezekiel*, 4th Printing edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 1999), 186.

Deception comes from our own hearts and forces God to take corrective or punitive actions. God's ultimate goal in dealing harshly with the people of Israel was to bring about their return to Him and a return to the covenant relationship with Him. God was, in effect, giving Israel what it wanted. God did not deceive Ezekiel. Verse 9 is not speaking of Ezekiel but of the false prophets leading Israel and speaking as though they were coming from God. The message the false prophets would deliver would be a deceptive message meant to give the people what they wanted to hear and not the truth.

But punishment would first come, and they could not seek direction from one of God's prophets to escape the punishment if they would not turn back to God. God called on the people to repent, over and over, and they did not. God had promised them that they would be punished; they would be removed from the land if they continued to violate their covenant with Him. Yet, Israel always believed that God would not actually punish them. Then Israel went into captivity in 722 BCE, and Judah said, but we are the favorite, so we will not be punished like they were. Then Judah went into captivity, beginning in 605 BCE, with captivity being fully implemented and Jerusalem and the temple destroyed in 586 BCE.

The end result of the punishment God was bringing to Israel would be their return to God and a return to the covenant relationship with Him. God always has restoration in mind when He punishes. God never punishes just for punishment's sake, at least not until the final judgment. Until then, God always looks for restoration.

#### Four Judgments Against Jerusalem 14:12-23

Ezekiel begins a new section here where he presents four judgments against Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 14:12–14 (ESV)*

*12 And the word of the LORD came to me: 13 "Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, 14 even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD.*

Again the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel. Typically in Ezekiel, this phrase indicates a new section or topic is beginning. God reminds Ezekiel that these judgments are because the people of Israel and, as we saw in the last section, the leadership of Israel had rebelled against God and made the land unfaithful. We should not interpret verse 13 as a reference to the physical land of Israel but the people of Israel. God even says that if Noah, Daniel, and Job were present in the land. All they could do was deliver themselves, not the people. Each of these men was known for their righteousness and for their faith. This statement from God had to be an encouragement for Ezekiel. He felt somewhat a failure, but if even these men could not have protected the people, he was in pretty good company.

God says that when people sin against Him and act faithlessly, He will stretch out His hand against them, break its bread supply, and completely isolate the people.

*Ezekiel 14:15–21 (ESV)*

*15 “If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no one may pass through because of the beasts, 16 even if these three men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate.*

*17 “Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword pass through the land, and I cut off from it man and beast, 18 though these three men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be delivered.*

*19 “Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast, 20 even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness.*

*21 “For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!*

He would also cause wild beasts to pass through the land and ravage it, making it desolate. No one could pass through the land without being attacked by wild beasts. Famine, wild animals, the sword, and the plague were covenant curses promised to Israel if they violated the covenant with God.

Famine:

*Leviticus 26:20 (ESV)*

*20 And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.*

Wild Beasts:

*Leviticus 26:22 (ESV)*

*22 And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.*

Sword:

*Leviticus 26:25 (ESV)*

*25 And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.*

*Leviticus 26:33 (ESV)*

*33 And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.*

Plague:

*Deuteronomy 32:24 (ESV)*

*24 they shall be wasted with hunger,  
and devoured by plague  
and poisonous pestilence;  
I will send the teeth of beasts against them,  
with the venom of things that crawl in the dust.*

These same punishments or corrections will come upon Israel during the tribulation.

*Revelation 6:8 (ESV)*

*8 And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.*

In verse 16, God refers back to Noah, Daniel, and Job. He says that even if they were present, they could not even get their own children out. These great men of faith would not have the ability to protect their own children, only themselves. That truly speaks to how far Israel had fallen in her rebellion from God. There is little question about who Noah and Job are. But there seems to be some doubt about who is being referred to here as Daniel. Ezekiel's spelling of Daniel is completely different from the exile, taken in the first wave by King Nebuchadnezzar. Some scholars argue that since Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, the reference to Daniel is most likely a reference to the mythical Dan'el, who in Ugaritic texts was a righteous ruler and judge, but who could not protect his own children. This interpretation presents all sorts of other problems and is rejected by this Bible Student.

It was a common practice to different spellings of a name. We have seen this in our study of the Old Testament. The Bible Knowledge Commentary states:

*But this identification should probably be rejected. The minor difference in spelling could be explained by the common practice of multiple spellings of a*

given name (cf. “Azariah”=“Uzziah,” 2 Kings 15:1; 2 Chron. 26:1; “Jehoram”=“Joram,” 2 Kings 3:1; 8:16).<sup>24</sup>

Ezekiel would have at least known about Daniel if not knew him personally. There is no indication in the Old Testament that the Jews or Ezekiel even knew about the mythical character of Dan’el. “It was Ezekiel’s purpose (Ezek. 14:1–11) to lambast idolatry. Would he use an idolatrous myth as a model of righteousness? By contrast, the biblical Daniel is the perfect example of a man who refused to compromise his beliefs.”<sup>25</sup> Each of these men was men of righteousness and served as a good example to the people of Israel.

*Ezekiel 14:21–23 (ESV)*

*21 “For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! 22 But behold, some survivors will be left in it, sons and daughters who will be brought out; behold, when they come out to you, and you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. 23 They will console you, when you see their ways and their deeds, and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, declares the Lord GOD.”*

It will be bad when God brings these judgments upon Israel and Jerusalem. Those in exile will be consoled when word comes to them from some of those who escape Jerusalem and make it to Babylon. The exiles will recognize that God was just in bringing punishment on the people, the land, and the city. That recognition would ultimately prove that God was righteous and His punishment just.

*The carnal mind struggles with the justice of God in the face of human tragedy, but the eyes of faith will recognize behind all tragedies the hand of God. When all evidence is in, his people will recognize that he does not operate arbitrarily or without cause. His actions are always according to his immutable principles of justice and righteousness.*<sup>26</sup>

## Jerusalem is a Useless Vine 15:1-8

*Ezekiel 15:1–5 (ESV)*

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<sup>24</sup> Charles H. Dyer, “Ezekiel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1254.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1254.

<sup>26</sup> “The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24 (New International Commentary on the Old Testament): Daniel I. Block: 8601406072725: Amazon.Com: Books,” 453, accessed October 8, 2019, [https://www.amazon.com/Ezekiel-Chapters-International-Commentary-Testament/dp/0802825354/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Block%2C+daniel+the+book+of+Ezekiel&qid=1570566327&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Ezekiel-Chapters-International-Commentary-Testament/dp/0802825354/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Block%2C+daniel+the+book+of+Ezekiel&qid=1570566327&sr=8-1).

*15 And the word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? 3 Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it? 4 Behold, it is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? 5 Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything!*

Again we see that Ezekiel is responding to direct revelation to him by God. We also see that Ezekiel is addressed as “son of Man.” In these verses, God questions Ezekiel concerning the value of wood and vines. God does this in preparation for the comparison of Jerusalem to the worthless vine in subsequent verses.

God asks Ezekiel, “how does the vine surpass any wood?” How is the wood of a vine any better than all the branches and trunks of the trees in the forest? The obvious answer is that apart from the ability of vines to bear fruit such as grapes, the actual wood provides very little use. You cannot build with it; it provides very little heat fuel when placed in the fire. In these five verses, God builds the case that the vine is not worth a great deal.

*Ezekiel 15:6–8 (ESV)*

*6 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 7 And I will set my face against them. Though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them, and you will know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. 8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, declares the Lord GOD.”*

After setting the stage of the comparative value of the vine and wood, God then uses this comparison to condemn Jerusalem. When you look through the Old Testament, there are many references to God taking the insignificant vine of Israel and planting it in the Promised Land and causing it to grow and flourish. Israel grew and prospered because of the blessing of God. But here in this present text, God will throw the people of Jerusalem in the fire and set His face against them. God also says that even though some escape the fire, the fire will still consume them. God's end result of this action will be that the people will know that He is the sovereign Lord. Not only will they be thrown in the fire. He will also make the land desolate.

The potential escape from the fire appears to reference the exiles that Ezekiel is actually speaking to. They had been taken out of Jerusalem, beginning in 605 BCE and then another group in 597 BCE. These exiles would be spared the destruction in Jerusalem but ultimately not escape the punishment from God as pictured by fire.

## The Peril of Forgetting God 16:1-17:24

Ezekiel chapter 15 and the allegory of the vine dealt with the judgment God brought upon Israel and Jerusalem. The next section, chapters 16 & 17, speaks Israel's history. Ezekiel 16 speaks of the depravity of Israel's past, while chapter 17 speaks of the immediate future for Israel.

### The Insatiable Adulteress 16:1-43

Ezekiel is one of the longest chapters in the Bible. It is actually longer than 6 of the books of Minor Prophets. We should view this chapter as an allegory of Israel's relationship with God. Ezekiel focuses on the relationship between God and Israel.

*Ezekiel 16:1–5 (ESV)*

*16 Again the word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, 3 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. 4 And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. 5 No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.*

God is speaking to Ezekiel again, calling him the “son of man.” God tells Ezekiel that he is to make known to Jerusalem all the charges that God has against them. God is not speaking of the origin of the Hebrew people but of the city of Jerusalem itself. Before King David making it the capital of Israel, seven years into his rule, the city was occupied by the Jebusites. The Jebusites were a Canaanite people.

Ezekiel pictures Jerusalem in the image of an unwanted child from a varied ethnic background. Ezekiel lists Jerusalem's ethnic background as an Amorite father and Hittite Mother. In the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, the Jebusites are listed between the Amorites and the Hittites. Ezekiel also speaks of Jerusalem as a baby that was not adequately cared for at birth.

It was custom at the time that a newborn baby would have the umbilical cord cut and then be washed. The baby then would be rubbed with salt to dry and firm the skin. The baby was then wrapped in a cloth to keep them warm and protected. But that did not happen for Jerusalem. No protected or cared for Jerusalem early on. Ezekiel says that, in fact, Jerusalem was rejected by its parents and thrown away. It was common in the Ancient Near East (ANE) to throw out into fields and valleys unwanted and deformed children. Ezekiel is saying that just as an unwanted baby is thrown away, Jerusalem was unwanted by the people and thrown away.

*Ezekiel 16:6–7 (ESV)*

*6 “And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ 7 I made you*

*flourish like a plant of the field. And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.*

God reflects here that He rescued Jerusalem after it had been thrown out. Not only did God rescue Jerusalem, but He caused Jerusalem to flourish. When King David seized Jerusalem to become the capital of Israel, Jerusalem became the regional powerhouse. Under David and Solomon, the government in Jerusalem controlled the entire Levant and much of the ANE. From obscurity under the Jebusites to regional powerhouse by the hand of God.

Despite the blessing of God, Jerusalem did not remain dedicated to following and serving God. Beginning with Solomon and many of his descendants, Jerusalem became a follower of many false gods, ultimately defiling God's temple in Jerusalem with idols and false gods being worshiped.

*Ezekiel 16:8 (ESV)*

*8 "When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord GOD, and you became mine.*

God here says that He entered into a marriage covenant with Jerusalem as representative of His chosen people. From the account of Ruth, we see the picture that God eludes to here, of using a garment to cover the other person as a sign of protection and betrothal. God pledged His love and protection of Jerusalem/Israel in the betrothal process and pledged His fidelity to Jerusalem. Jerusalem/Israel replied in the covenant the same thing. But it did not take long until Israel wandered from following God to following others.

*Ezekiel 16:9–14 (ESV)*

*9 Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. 10 I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. 11 And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. 12 And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. 14 And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD.*

To prepare Jerusalem for the marriage covenant, God took Jerusalem and washed her, and made her ceremonially clean. The girl that had been naked was now clothed with an embroidered dress of fine linen, fine leather sandals, and other costly garments. God took Jerusalem and adorned

her with the greatest and best there was to offer. He also gave her a crown, which is indicative of making Jerusalem the capital.

German Old testament theologian Walter Eichrodt states:

*Her princely benefactor further shows his regard for her by himself preparing her for the wedding ceremony by bathing and anointing her, and loading her with rich clothing and costly jewels, among which the bridal crown, mentioned last of all, gives her all the appearance of a bride being led to her wedding.<sup>27</sup>*

God had taken Jerusalem and caused her to be noticed by the other nations. Jerusalem became a well-known and desired location as the capital of Israel. But the fact of the fame and beauty of Jerusalem also become part of the sin of Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 16:15–17 (ESV)*

*15 “But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his. 16 You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The like has never been, nor ever shall be. 17 You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore.*

Despite all that God had done for Jerusalem, taking the small city and making it a name in the world, it did not take long for the people of Jerusalem to begin to follow other gods. God accuses Jerusalem of playing the whore or prostituting herself out to other gods. With a covenant between Israel and God which bound both Israel and God to certain things, when the people of Israel and Jerusalem began to follow other gods, God characterized it as violating the covenant as a prostitute.

God had provided the people of Jerusalem with all they needed to build a temple in which they would worship Him. But then the people began to use the temple to worship false and foreign gods. In verse 16, Ezekiel records that Jerusalem took some of God's garments and made shrines for false gods. This would be a reference to the temple. In verse 17, the reference to the jewels along with gold and silver to worship other gods. Of course, we know that it did not take the Hebrews long after fleeing Egypt before they took their jewelry and made idols, such as the golden calf.

*Ezekiel 16:18–22 (ESV)*

*18 And you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them. 19 Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey—you set before them for a pleasing aroma; and so it was, declares the Lord GOD. 20 And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured.*

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<sup>27</sup> Rooker, Anders, and Rooker, *Ezekiel*, 117.

*Were your whorings so small a matter 21 that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them? 22 And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your blood.*

God here, through Ezekiel, references the sacrifice of children to false gods in Jerusalem. The Canaanite practice of sacrificing children was forbidden to Israel.

*Leviticus 18:21 (ESV)*

*21 You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.*

Despite the multiple passages in which God forbids Israel from child sacrifice, child sacrifice was a common practice in Jerusalem by the time of Ezekiel.

*2 Kings 21:6 (ESV)*

*6 And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.*

This is a reference to the evil conducted by King Manasseh.

*Jeremiah 7:30–31 (ESV)*

*30 “For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the LORD. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 31 And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.*

Here Jeremiah talks about the practices in Jerusalem in his day.

Jerusalem had become estranged from God and actively worshiped and followed false gods in almost everything she did. Israel had completely forgotten all that God had done for the people. The protection in the wilderness. The giving of the land to the Hebrews in the conquest. The protection of the people from the attacks of their enemies. But Israel and her leadership had forgotten all that God had done for them.

*Ezekiel 16:23–29 (ESV)*

*23 “And after all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! declares the Lord GOD), 24 you built yourself a vaulted chamber and made yourself a lofty place in every square. 25 At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, offering yourself to any passerby and multiplying your whoring. 26 You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger. 27 Behold, therefore, I stretched out my hand against you and diminished your allotted*

*portion and delivered you to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. 28 You played the whore also with the Assyrians, because you were not satisfied; yes, you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. 29 You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied.*

As time went on, the people walked further and further away from God and built their shrines to false gods. Jerusalem became a city dedicated to many gods rather than the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So attracted to false gods that Israel sought the gods of many of her enemies. In verse 26, Ezekiel refers to the Egyptians, Assyria in verse 28, Babylon in verse 29. In mentioning these foreign powers and their gods, Ezekiel is alluding to the worship of these false gods and Israel's allegiances with these countries. Rather than depend on God, Israel and Judah had entered agreements with these foreign nations to protect them. But in doing that, Israel and Judah ended up losing territory and freedom.

*Ezekiel 16:30–34 (ESV)*

*30 “How sick is your heart, declares the Lord GOD, because you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen prostitute, 31 building your vaulted chamber at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square. Yet you were not like a prostitute, because you scorned payment. 32 Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! 33 Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side with your whorings. 34 So you were different from other women in your whorings. No one solicited you to play the whore, and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; therefore you were different.*

God here calls Israel generally and Jerusalem, specifically a brazen prostitute. No longer willing to hide but openly following false gods. God then modifies His characterization of Israel as a prostitute who seeks payment for services. Israel did not seek payment, which made Israel look like an adulterous wife—being both an adulterous wife and prostitute because she seeks strange men rather than her own husband. Of course, the strange man references the false gods Israel followed rather than the one true God.

*Ezekiel 16:35–43 (ESV)*

*35 “Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of the LORD: 36 Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, 37 therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated. I will gather them against you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness. 38 And I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. 39 And I will give you into their*

*hands, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places. They shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful jewels and leave you naked and bare. 40 They shall bring up a crowd against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. 41 And they shall burn your houses and execute judgments upon you in the sight of many women. I will make you stop playing the whore, and you shall also give payment no more. 42 So will I satisfy my wrath on you, and my jealousy shall depart from you. I will be calm and will no more be angry. 43 Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things, therefore, behold, I have returned your deeds upon your head, declares the Lord GOD. Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations?*

God then tells Jerusalem that He will uncover Jerusalem and lay her bare for all to see her nakedness. We see in this section that since Israel and turned to follow those other gods of the other nations, God would use those nations to destroy Israel. The punishment was coming at the hands of the nations that Israel had turned to.

The northern tribes of Israel had reached an agreement for protection from Assyria, who then destroyed Israel and removed the northern tribes. Judah, the two southern tribes, had an agreement with Babylon, who ended up taking it into captivity. God used who the Jews had turned to instead of Him to punish them.

Israel had forgotten all the things that God had done to deliver and protect Israel. In not remembering all that God had done, they had committed many abominations that God said He would bring back upon them. They were, in effect, reaping what they had sown.

## God's People Are No Different Than The World 16:44-59

*Ezekiel 16:44–47 (ESV)*

*44 "Behold, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you: 'Like mother, like daughter.' 45 You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. 46 And your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. 47 Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.*

God continues in His analogy, but in this section, instead of talking about Jerusalem as an adulterous wife, God now speaks of the punishment due to Jerusalem just like it was for Jerusalem's sisters Samaria and Sodom. If God punished them, how much more would He punish Jerusalem, whose sins were greater. Ezekiel reiterates the ancestral background of Jerusalem that He had given earlier in the chapter. God had already judged both Sodom and Samaria for their sins. Jerusalem had committed even greater sins.

*Ezekiel 16:48–52 (ESV)*

*48 As I live, declares the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. 49 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. 50 They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. 51 Samaria has not committed half your sins. You have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. 52 Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have intervened on behalf of your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.*

Being more depraved than Sodom and Samaria, Jerusalem now stood in line for punishment from God. While the sin of Samaria is not stated in this passage, it is generally believed to have been idolatry. We know the sins of Sodom from the accounts in the book of Genesis. God says that the sins of Jerusalem were so grievous that it almost made the sins of Sodom and Samaria look righteous. That's pretty bad!

*Ezekiel 16:53–58 (ESV)*

*53 "I will restore their fortunes, both the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes in their midst, 54 that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them. 55 As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your daughters shall return to your former state. 56 Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride, 57 before your wickedness was uncovered? Now you have become an object of reproach for the daughters of Syria and all those around her, and for the daughters of the Philistines, those all around who despise you. 58 You bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, declares the LORD.*

As we have seen in our study of God's Word, God seeks restoration, not just punishment. God here provides some consoling words for Jerusalem. God here speaks of the restoration of all three sisters, Jerusalem, Sodom, and Samaria. God will restore the fortunes of all three cities. Ezekiel is speaking of a national restoration of Israel during the millennial kingdom when Israel will be restored to full glory, including the cities of Samaria and Sodom.

*Ezekiel 16:59–63 (ESV)*

*59 "For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, 60 yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an*

*everlasting covenant. 61 Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. 62 I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, 63 that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord GOD.”*

God will judge Israel and punish her for her sin. He will also restore her to fellowship with Him. Ezekiel emphasizes that God is not abandoning Israel, Judah, or Jerusalem. He is punishing Israel for her sins in accordance with the covenant Israel had agreed to with God. God will provide a new covenant with his people in the Millennial kingdom, also recorded in Jer 31.

### Unconditional Grace 16:60-63

*Ezekiel 16:60–63 (ESV)*

*60 yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. 61 Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. 62 I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, 63 that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord GOD.”*

God will judge Israel, yet He will still remain party to the covenant agreed to by Israel and God. God was not throwing out the treaty or covenant. He was enforcing it. God was also going to go further in that He will provide Israel with an everlasting covenant in which Israel will never be ashamed, and God has atoned for all of Israel. God will restore the land and the people. Of course, we know that this restoration is still the future and will occur during the Millennial Kingdom. Israel will be prepared for the Millennial Kingdom during the tribulation and will be the focus of God's attention on the world. Jesus will be on the throne of David and rule from Jerusalem for 1,000 years. As God restores Israel, He will also restore the people. Israel will recognize God's goodness and grace given to them.

### Judah's Future 17:1-21

Ezekiel moves on to present to the people of Israel in exile in Babylon Judah's future. Ezekiel uses the imagery of two eagles and a vine to describe Judah's relationship with Babylon and Egypt.

*Ezekiel 17:1–6 (ESV)*

*17 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, propound a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel; 3 say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A great*

*eagle with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colors, came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar. 4 He broke off the topmost of its young twigs and carried it to a land of trade and set it in a city of merchants. 5 Then he took of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil. He placed it beside abundant waters. He set it like a willow twig, 6 and it sprouted and became a low spreading vine, and its branches turned toward him, and its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine and produced branches and put out boughs.*

Again we should see God referring to Ezekiel as “Son of Man.” God tells Ezekiel that he is to give Israel a riddle and a parable. God then tells Ezekiel to tell Israel a story about a great eagle with great wings, long pinions, and lots of colors. This eagle came to Lebanon and came to rest at the top of a great cedar. Breaking off the top of the cedar tree, the eagle took the top of the tree to a land of trade and a city of merchants where it was replanted.

*Ezekiel 16:29 (ESV)*

*29 You multiplied your whoring also with the trading land of Chaldea, and even with this you were not satisfied.*

Many scholars go back to this verse to identify the city of merchants from 17:5 as Babylon. The top of the cedars represents the majesty of Jerusalem, the temple, and the palace built with cedars from Lebanon. Taking the best of Jerusalem off to Babylon in the exile that Nebedchadnezzar conducted is what the riddle of the Eagle and treetop represents.

*Ezekiel 17:7–8 (ESV)*

*7 “And there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage, and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him and shot forth its branches toward him from the bed where it was planted, that he might water it. 8 It had been planted on good soil by abundant waters, that it might produce branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine.*

This second riddle or parable speaks of another eagle that came along to entice a vine away from where it was planted. After being replanted in Babylon, the vine speaks of Israel; it was no longer a strong cedar but now just a lowly vine in the Levant. Israel in exile remained a people and was provided nourishment, just like a tree planted by the stream for water. The second eagle represents Egypt, seeking to draw Judah from Babylon to increase Egypt's holdings and power. We know that after the siege on Jerusalem began in 605BC, Zedekiah appealed to Egypt for help with Babylon.

*Ezekiel 17:9–10 (ESV)*

*9 “Say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit, so that it withers, so that all its fresh sprouting leaves wither? It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it from its roots. 10 Behold, it is planted; will it thrive? Will it not utterly wither when the east wind strikes it—wither away on the bed where it sprouted?”*

God asks a rhetorical question based upon the apparent shift of loyalty from Babylon to Egypt by Zedekiah. God asks, “Will it thrive?” “Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit?” Ezekiel warns that such an appeal will be disastrous and will result in more destruction. Despite the soil favoring growth and life, Judah will wither. An east wind will strike it. Clearly, an east wind is a reference to the destruction that Babylon will bring upon Judah.

*Ezekiel 17:11–15 (ESV)*

*11 Then the word of the LORD came to me: 12 “Say now to the rebellious house, Do you not know what these things mean? Tell them, behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon. 13 And he took one of the royal offspring and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath (the chief men of the land he had taken away), 14 that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and keep his covenant that it might stand. 15 But he rebelled against him by sending his ambassadors to Egypt, that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he thrive? Can one escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape?”*

In these verses, we have some explanation of the previous section. God tells Ezekiel to ask the rebellious house if they know or understand what these things mean. God then tells Ezekiel that he will report that Nebbudchanezzar will come to Jerusalem, seize the king and his sons, and carry them away to Babylon. Zedekiah also brought further disgrace upon the people when he broke the treaty with Nebuchadnezzar by reaching out to Egypt. Zedekiah had invoked the name of Yahweh in the oath he made with Babylon for protection. Judgment would come and then subjection of the people to the foreign power as punishment.

*Ezekiel 17:16–21 (ESV)*

*16 “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwells who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke, in Babylon he shall die. 17 Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in war, when mounds are cast up and siege walls built to cut off many lives. 18 He despised the oath in breaking the covenant, and behold, he gave his hand and did all these things; he shall not escape. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely it is my oath that he despised, and my covenant that he broke. I will return it upon his head. 20 I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treachery he has committed against me. 21 And all the pick of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind, and you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken.”*

Zedekiah would receive no help from Egypt. Punishment for violating his oath will be death. Zedekiah despised the oath he had made to God, and death was the penalty to Babylon. God says that Zedekiah will be captured and brought to Babylon, where he will be punished.

When Babylon approached, Zedekiah's army fled, leaving the king and his sons to be captured and taken to Babylon. 2 King 24:3-7.

## The New Eden 17:22-24

So that the people would not get too discouraged, Ezekiel adds a short addendum to this passage.

*Ezekiel 17:22–24 (ESV)*

*22 Thus says the Lord GOD: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. 23 On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. 24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it."*

God says that He Himself will take a twig or offshoot from the top of the cedar, which represented Judah, and plant it. He will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. We should note that when God says "I Myself" in Hebrew, it is viewed as being emphatic. God is making a point that He alone will do this, not the work of a king or other leader; it is His work.

God will take a twig from the top of the tree, which leads us to conclude that God is speaking of protecting a remnant from Israel who will become a great leader. This twig will grow into a prominent tree under which every kind of bird will dwell. All the trees of the field will know that God is the sovereign Lord. God then reminds Ezekiel that He has said it, which means that He will do it. There is certainly to it.

These verses present the certainty of the promises of God. God promised to restore Israel to the point that all of the worlds would be protected and blessed. Some scholars argue that this was fulfilled when Zerubbabel led the return to Judah and rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the temple. But that restoration did not include an Israel that would provide for the rest of the world. That will come when Israel is completely restored in the millennial kingdom. A promise from God that will be fulfilled in our future.

## All Must Repent 18:1-20:44

This next section of three chapters presents the reality that we must all face up to our sins and confess them to God. Chapter 18 deals with individuals' repentance. Chapter 19 deals with the repentance of leadership, while chapter 20 deals with national accountability for their sins.

### Individual Accountability 18:1-32

*Ezekiel 18:1–4 (ESV)*

*18 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? 3 As I live, declares the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4 Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.*

Again we see that Ezekiel is reporting that he is giving what God gave to him. God asks a series of questions dealing with certain proverbs circulated around Israel and the people in captivity. One such proverb was, “the father eats sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Jeremiah also quoted this same proverb in Jer 31:29-30. The point of the proverb was that the current people of Israel and Judah were suffering because of the sinful life of their ancestors. It was not their sins that they were being punished for but the sins of their fathers. In effect, the people blamed God for punishing them, but they were not guilty and did not deserve the punishment.

God’s response to the proverb is that it is not a valid argument. While it is not a valid argument, it does, like most false doctrines, have a semblance of truth in it. God said in”

*Exodus 20:5 (ESV)*

*5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,*

God had told Israel that the father's sins would affect the children to third and fourth generations as a jealous God. So there is a basis in truth with what the exiled Jews were saying. There is also the reality that much of Ezekiel’s teaching up to this point has spoken about the rebellion of the people to the covenant enacted by their ancestors and God. The exile they were then in was because of the accumulated actions of Israel and Judah, not just the rebellion of the present Jews. The people saw these factoids and made them the center of their argument against God. The only way they could be extricated for culpability then was to blame God for their problems.

What we in the west in 2020 who do not live in tribal situations do not understand is the construct of corporate responsibility. In the west, we are very individualized, and the idea of tribal or corporate responsibility for the sins of one member is foreign to us. But it is a very valid and Biblical Theological construct. One just has to think of Adam’s plunging all of humanity into sin by his own sins. Or you could turn to Joshua 7 and look at the account of Achan’s sin and the punishment that Achan and his family were given. As the head of the family, Achan’s sin caused punishment upon the entire family.

While the theological doctrine of headship remains true, it does abrogate responsibility from each sinner. Adam plunged humanity into sin, but sinners are not punished because of Adam’s sin; they are punished for their own sin. Every human is a sinner in their own right, not just Adam’s sin.

Having declared that Israel and Judah are being punished for their own sins, not simply just the sins of their ancestors, he now presents three examples. In verses 5-9, Ezekiel presents a righteous person who does right. In verses 10-13, Ezekiel presents a wicked son of a righteous father and then in 14-20, the righteous son of a wicked father. Each of these cases reinforces individual responsibility.

*Ezekiel 18:5–9 (ESV)*

*5 “If a man is righteous and does what is just and right— 6 if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor’s wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity, 7 does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 8 does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man, 9 walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord GOD.*

Ezekiel describes a righteous man as doing what is just and right. This man follows God’s instructions and principles properly. He did not eat at the mountain shrines to foreign gods. He did not follow after idols. The righteous man also followed the rules on treating other Israelites, and he kept himself morally pure. Adultery and sexual intercourse during menstruation were prohibited by law in Israel.

*Ezekiel 18:10–13 (ESV)*

*10 “If he fathers a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, who does any of these things 11 (though he himself did none of these things), who even eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor’s wife, 12 oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, 13 lends at interest, and takes profit; shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.*

Ezekiel changes his example in these verses to the wicked son of a righteous father. The son was violent and a killer. The son worships in the mountain shrines of the false gods, has illicit sexual activity while stealing from the poor and needy. This son is a robber and a loan shark. God says this man will pay the price for his sins. He will be punished for the sins he committed, not because of the sins of others but for his own sins, which are plenty.

*Ezekiel 18:14–18 (ESV)*

*14 “Now suppose this man fathers a son who sees all the sins that his father has done; he sees, and does not do likewise: 15 he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor’s wife, 16 does not oppress anyone, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but*

*gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 17 withholds his hand from iniquity, takes no interest or profit, obeys my rules, and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. 18 As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.*

Now the grandson of the original man recognizes the sins of his father and does not follow his father. He does not eat at the shrines in the mountains, he does not worship false gods. He does not defile his neighbor's wife. He does not steal or conduct usury in exacting very high interest. In fact, the grandson gives to the poor both food and clothes. God says that this man will not die as a result of the sins of his father. His father will be executed for his wons sins, but he will not.

*Ezekiel 18:21–23 (ESV)*

*21 "But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. 23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?"*

A sinner can escape God's judgment through repentance of their individual sins.

*Proverbs 28:13 (ESV)*

*13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper,  
but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*

Repentance leads to mercy from God. When a person repents of their sins and turns to follow all of God's direction will result in salvation. Not because they kept the laws but because of the change of heart and direction, which we call repentance. By turning to follow God, we forsake the idea of saving ourselves and turn to God's saving grace and mercy.

*Ezekiel 18:24 (ESV)*

*24 But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die.*

Even though God forgives the sins of those who turn to righteousness, He will not excuse the sins of a righteous man who turns wickedness. God asks the question, shall such a man live? What does he mean by "live?" Through progressive revelation, which includes the New Testament, we know that a person who has trusted Jesus to save them can never do anything to become unsaved. So that would then mean that "live" here is not a reference to eternal life but physical life. What does God do with a believer who turns away from Him and becomes a

wicked person? He corrects them, and if that does not work, He takes them out; He ends their life. God does not un-save them; He executes them physically.

*Ezekiel 18:25–29 (ESV)*

*25 “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? 26 When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. 27 Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. 28 Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 29 Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?”*

Yet Israel still complains that God is not just. Ezekiel pointed out that God only punishes people for their own sins, but Israel did not believe or accept that answer. God then asks Israel if His way is not just. He then asks if it is not really their way that is unjust. God then reiterates what has been said. When a righteous man turns from righteousness to wickedness, he will pay the price. When a wicked person repeats, he will be blessed with life. Despite the truth of this, Israel still maintained that God was unfair. It happens all the time that God is blamed when it is the sin of man to blame.

*Ezekiel 18:30–32 (ESV)*

*30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.”*

Despite the complaints from Israel, God says He will still judge Israel, each individual according to their ways. God then gives another opportunity for repentance lest they are left in ruins. God takes no pleasure in judging and executing sinners.

## Royal Accountability 19:1-14

To the reader of Ezekiel, it quickly becomes apparent that chapter 19 is different than the text around it. In most English translations, most of the text of chapter 19 is indented, both left and right. This is typically used to display genres other than narrative. The lament appears as bookends for chapter 19, appearing in the first verse and again in the last verse, verse 14. This gives us some indication that the text in between is a lament or dirge. In fact, chapter 19 is actually two funeral dirges. Verses 1-9 comprise a king's dirge, while 10-14 are a dirge for the kingship itself.

*Ezekiel 19:1–2 (ESV)*

*19 And you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2 and say:*

*What was your mother? A lioness!*

*Among lions she crouched;*

*in the midst of young lions*

*she reared her cubs.*

Ezekiel uses the imagery of a lioness and her cubs to tell the story of the defeat of the Judean king. The mother lion represents Israel, while the baby lions represent the princes of Judah.

*Ezekiel 19:3–4 (ESV)*

*3 And she brought up one of her cubs;*

*he became a young lion,*

*and he learned to catch prey;*

*he devoured men.*

*4 The nations heard about him;*

*he was caught in their pit,*

*and they brought him with hooks*

*to the land of Egypt.*

One of the cubs from the lioness became a strong lion, which is believed to be symbolism for a king. Many scholars believe that this refers to Jehoahaz, who ascended to the throne after King Josiah died. Josiah sought to gain favor with Babylon, so he fought against Pharaoh Neco II, who aligned with the Assyrians. In 609 BC at Megiddo, King Josiah was killed as Neco II defeated him and his army. Following this, the combined forces of Egypt and Assyria attacked Babylon. Assyria seems to fade away, leaving Egypt to go against Babylon. The war between Babylon and Egypt raged on for years. Then in 605BC, at Carchemish, Egypt was defeated, and the military leader of Babylon expanded the territory of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar would return to Babylon as a great military victor and received the crown as King of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar would return later that year to Jerusalem and begin to go against Judah to repay Josiah's failed plans. It was at this time that Daniel and his companions were taken captive and sent to Babylon.

*Ezekiel 19:5–9 (ESV)*

*5 When she saw that she waited in vain,*

*that her hope was lost,*

*she took another of her cubs  
and made him a young lion.*

*6 He prowled among the lions;  
he became a young lion,*

*and he learned to catch prey;  
he devoured men,*

*7 and seized their widows.*

*He laid waste their cities,  
and the land was appalled and all who were in it  
at the sound of his roaring.*

*8 Then the nations set against him  
from provinces on every side;*

*they spread their net over him;  
he was taken in their pit.*

*9 With hooks they put him in a cage  
and brought him to the king of Babylon;*

*they brought him into custody,  
that his voice should no more be heard  
on the mountains of Israel.*

After one lion cub was lost, the lioness prepared another cub to be an even stronger lion. This cub became strong and feared. Some scholars have identified this second lion as Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. His entire reign was during the period that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege on Jerusalem. Zedekiah and Josiah had the same mother. This fact provides the bulk of the reason that Zedekiah is seen as the second lion cub. Other scholars argue that the second cub was Jehoiachin, who was taken captive and transported to Babylon. The reference to spreading a net and being taken in a pit correlates to Jehoiachin being taken captive and sent to Babylon.

*Ezekiel 19:10–14 (ESV)*

*10 Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard  
planted by the water,*

*fruitful and full of branches  
by reason of abundant water.*

*11 Its strong stems became  
rulers' scepters;*

*it towered aloft  
among the thick boughs;*

*it was seen in its height  
with the mass of its branches.*

*12 But the vine was plucked up in fury,  
cast down to the ground;*

*the east wind dried up its fruit;  
they were stripped off and withered.*

*As for its strong stem,  
fire consumed it.*

*13 Now it is planted in the wilderness,  
in a dry and thirsty land.*

*14 And fire has gone out from the stem of its shoots,  
has consumed its fruit,*

*so that there remains in it no strong stem,  
no scepter for ruling.*

*This is a lamentation and has become a lamentation.*

In this second lament, Ezekiel changes the imagery from a lioness and lion cubs to a vine and branches. The vine metaphor has been used by Ezekiel already a couple of times, in 15:1-8 and 17:5-10. On both of these previous occasions, it was used to symbolize the fall and decline of Judah.

The vine represents God's favor rather than Babylon's help, as it did in chapter 17. God gave Israel a home of her own and then gave them relative rest. God had promised that He would protect and sustain the people and nation of Israel, provided the people of Israel remained

faithful to God. If Israel turned from God and violated God's commands, they would be punished, yet the Davidic line would not be destroyed; it would survive.

The vine represents the Davidic covenant. When Israel turned from following God and being obedient to Him, God uprooted the vine; He did not destroy it but uprooted it. In the lament of verses 10-14, God uproots the vine, strips it of fruit, and causes it to wither. Most scholars believe that this is a reference to Zedekiah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

God did not destroy the vine but transplanted it into the desert. In the desert, the vine languished, without a strong branch or fruit. This seems to reference the Babylonian captivity in which the monarchy comes to an end, at least for a period of time.

Of course, we know through the study of the rest of scripture that the Davidic line was not eliminated. It will return to the throne when Jesus, a descendant of David, rises to the throne of David during the Millennial Kingdom.

### National Accountability 20:1-31

Ezekiel introduces a new date, which indicates that Ezekiel is moving into a new section of the book.

*Ezekiel 20:1–2 (ESV)*

*20 In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me. 2 And the word of the LORD came to me:*

The precise dating given by Ezekiel indicates that this communication from God to Ezekiel occurred eleven months after the last dated prophecy given in chapter 8. It also dates to four years before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 586 BCE.

*Ezekiel 20:3–4 (ESV)*

*3 “Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD, Is it to inquire of me that you come? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. 4 Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Let them know the abominations of their fathers,*

Again God refers to Ezekiel as the Son of Man. God tells Ezekiel to speak to the Elders of Israel. We should remember that most of Judah's leadership had been taken captive, many early on by Babylon. They were present there with Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar canal.

God tells Ezekiel to tell the Elders that He (God) will not respond to their inquiry. Dr. Ian Duguid, a Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, states: “It is not what they ask the Lord finds unacceptable but who they are.”<sup>28</sup> Duguid points out that God found the character and heart of the Judean leadership to be unworthy of His response. They had no

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<sup>28</sup> Duguid, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 260.

standing before God to require anything from Him. What the Judean leadership deserves is not God's response but His judgment. The Judean leadership had failed to remove the abominations of their fathers, allowing it to continue on in the world. Judah had devolved into a basically pagan nation with the worship of many pagan gods, including the sacrifice of children to these false gods.

*Ezekiel 20:5 (ESV)*

*5 and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt; I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God.*

God then begins to remind the Judean leadership that God has selected the people of Israel and swore to the entire line of people that He was their God. God chose to reveal Himself to them so they would know and relate to Him.

*Ezekiel 20:6 (ESV)*

*6 On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands.*

God then told the leadership that he brought them out of their slavery in Egypt. He caused the slaves to be released and then provided for them a beautiful land to possess. A land flowing with milk and honey indicates that the land was full of natural resources, including farms and growing crops to provide for the people. God called it the most glorious of all lands. I love this statement when you consider the location of the Levant is at the crossroads of three continents, full of natural resources, a perfect place to plant a nation that is to be the focus of God in the world.

*Ezekiel 20:7–8 (ESV)*

*7 And I said to them, 'Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.' 8 But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. None of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.*

*"Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.*

When God planted the people of Israel in their new land, He told them to turn away from their idols and false gods, including the gods of Egypt, that they had been accustomed to while in captivity in Egypt. But Israel refused to be devoted exclusively to God. They refused to give up their false gods and listened only to God. They refused to throw away their false gods. God then promised that He would pour out His wrath upon the people of Israel for their rejection of God.

What event God and Ezekiel had in view in these verses is not directly known. It appears that the event is not recorded elsewhere in Scripture. Some scholars believe that God was referring to the

golden calf while fleeing Egypt in Exodus 32. Moses appealed to God on behalf of the people to spare them. The lesson appears to be here that God desires to redeem us and fulfill His promises to us faithfully despite our sinfulness.

*Ezekiel 20:9 (ESV)*

*9 But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.*

God protected His name before the rest of the world and brought the Hebrews out of Egypt, despite their rebellion. God indicates that His actions in bringing the Hebrews out of Egypt set the stage for the entire world, knowing who He is.

*Ezekiel 20:10–14 (ESV)*

*10 So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. 11 I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live. 12 Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. 13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned.*

*“Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them. 14 But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out.*

After coming out of Egypt, the people spent 40 years in the wilderness. During this time, God gave them the law, making known to them what He expected out of them. Obedience to the law would be evidence that the person trusted and followed God, resulting in salvation. God specifically says that He gave the sabbath principle as a sign between them so they would know that He is the Lord who sanctifies them. The word “know” in our English texts is the Hebrew word יָדָעַתִּי (lāda‘at) pronounced yada. In verse 5, this same word is translated as revealed. It carries the idea of not simply knowing something or someone but knowing by personal experience. God wanted them to relate to Him in a personal relationship.

The Hebrews rebelled against God while still in the wilderness. They were not obedient to the rules He had given them, and to which they agreed to be obedient, including the sabbath principle, which they frequently violated. To this rebellion, while in the wilderness, God said He would a complete end to them. Execute them all. But to protect His name among the nation, He did not execute them all.

*Ezekiel 20:15–17 (ESV)*

*15 Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, 16 because they rejected my rules and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. 17 Nevertheless, my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make a full end of them in the wilderness.*

Despite their rebellion of the people and the promise of punishment, God allowed the people into the promised land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. The entire generation that left Egypt died in the desert, except 2. They died in the wilderness because of their rebellion from God. Yet their children were permitted to enter the Promised Land.

*Ezekiel 20:18–22 (ESV)*

*18 “And I said to their children in the wilderness, ‘Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor keep their rules, nor defile yourselves with their idols. 19 I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules, 20 and keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.’ 21 But the children rebelled against me. They did not walk in my statutes and were not careful to obey my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; they profaned my Sabbaths.*

*“Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. 22 But I withheld my hand and acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out.*

To the children of the people that left Egypt, the ones God permitted to enter the Promised Land, God gave the same instructions He gave their parents. Obey my commandments and forsake the false gods all around you. But they did not obey, violating God’s laws, including the sabbath. Once again, the punishment should have been eliminated, but God again did not pour out His anger on them so that His name would not be profaned in the other nations.

*Ezekiel 20:23–26 (ESV)*

*23 Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, 24 because they had not obeyed my rules, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my Sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their fathers’ idols. 25 Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good and rules by which they could not have life, 26 and I defiled them through their very gifts in their offering up all their firstborn, that I might devastate them. I did it that they might know that I am the LORD.*

Rather than completely eliminate all the Jews, God wore to them that He would scatter them among the nations and countries. Since they did not obey the rules God had given them, they would eventually be removed from the land. Of course, we know that this dispersion began with the Assyrians in 722 BCE for the northern tribes. It continues with the captivity by the

Babylonians that began in 605BCE. We know that after 70 years, they were free to return to Israel and Jerusalem but were not free of outside rule. That dispersion continued through to May 1948, when Israel became a nation again. But the dispersion will remain until Jesus calls Israel together and the millennial kingdom begins. Only then will the dispersion be ended when Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, is on the throne.

In verses 25 and 26, we see that the people of Israel thought the laws God had given them were no good and turned to the religious practices of pagans around them for their worship. The frequent reference to the sabbath is believed to refer to the sabbath year or every 7<sup>th</sup> year. It is estimated that Israel owed God 70 sabbatical years by the time of the Babylonian captivity.

The Sabbatical year would come every 7<sup>th</sup> year. During this time, the farmers would rest their land from bearing crops. No food would be purposefully grown. Their food would come from what God grew wild for them. They had to demonstrate dependence on Him. Hebrews that had sold themselves into slavery would be freed. Loans not yet due would be forgiven. God had given these instructions, but Israel rarely observed the sabbatical year. Jeremiah preached that the people should be obedient to God, including the law of the sabbatical year. During Nehemiah's time, the people renewed a commitment to the observation of the sabbatical year. Yet, there is no indication that it was actually observed.

*Ezekiel 20:27–29 (ESV)*

*27 “Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: In this also your fathers blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me. 28 For when I had brought them into the land that I swore to give them, then wherever they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices and there they presented the provocation of their offering; there they sent up their pleasing aromas, and there they poured out their drink offerings. 29 (I said to them, ‘What is the high place to which you go?’ So its name is called Bamah to this day.)*

God then directed Ezekiel to speak to the people of Israel. The sins of the people of Israel continued, so Ezekiel zeroed into the primary sin of the people of Israel, their idolatry. God asks a rhetorical question concerning the places they go to practice their idolatry. It appears that God is indicting the Jews and not giving them the ability to respond. It is almost like the Jews thought they could worship idols and false gods without God knowing. But God knows their heart; He knows their thoughts.

*Ezekiel 20:30–31 (ESV)*

*30 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and go whoring after their detestable things? 31 When you present your gifts and offer up your children in fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you.*

God then gives specific instructions on what Ezekiel is to say to the people, the question he was to ask them. Having zeroed in on the sin of Israel being primarily that of idolatry, including child sacrifice, God turns to the future for Israel. The people of Israel in captivity continued to engage in the sins of their ancestors. The people Ezekiel was dealing with then were as guilty as their fathers, a point made back in chapter 18. Because of their own guilt, they would be exiled by God. Because of their sin, God was not going to allow them to inquire of Him. They had forfeited their ability to make requests of God.

### Transformation of Israel 20:32-44

*Ezekiel 20:32 (ESV)*

*32 “What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, ‘Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.’*

Israel, throughout her history, wanted to be like the nations around her. First with a king than with their gods. God was giving them what they wanted to be like the other nations. Without the protection God provided them and without His care for them.

*Ezekiel 20:33–34 (ESV)*

*33 “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out I will be king over you. 34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out.*

But all is not lost for Israel. Here God promises that He will restore the people to their land and kingdom. He will return the people from the Diaspora around the world. But rather than a mortal king, God says He will be king over Israel. God’s might will be used to bring the people out of the countries they will be in. Of course, we know this will occur at the end of the tribulation when Israel has been prepared for Jesus to be on the throne of Israel and the world.

*Ezekiel 20:35–38 (ESV)*

*35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. 36 As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD. 37 I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. 38 I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.*

God will miraculously bring the future Jews into the wilderness to prepare them for the rise of Jesus to the throne. This is a reference to the tribulation time when Israel will be prepared for the

millennial kingdom. God will judge and clear out those who do not follow properly. This will result in Israel being purified and ready to receive the monarchy of Jesus.

*Ezekiel 20:39 (ESV)*

*39 “As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols.*

Those that do not turn to worship and follow God will be finally given over to their own desires, but God will no longer allow them to give Him sacrifices in the hopes He will have mercy on them. Israel always kept a little worship of God so that God would be obligated to protect them, even while they worshiped false gods.

*Ezekiel 20:40–44 (ESV)*

*40 “For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings. 41 As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. 42 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your fathers. 43 And there you shall remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. 44 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name’s sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.”*

God then declares that all of Israel will serve Him in the land. God will again accept them. They will again return to the sacrificial system providing offerings and gifts to worship God in the land. God will again accept their worship and prayers. Prayers which He had rejected as He exiled them from the land, He would again receive.

In this passage, we see four things. First, God will show himself as Holy to the people of Israel. (41) Second, Israel will know that Yahweh is their God when He fulfills His promise to them. (42) Third, when they are back into the land, the people will repent and turn back to God. (43) Fourth, then they would see that God has been consistent with His character and name throughout their history. (44).

Ezekiel was prophesying a future for Israel that included the restoration of Israel based upon their repentance. The prophecy of Zechariah corroborates this. God ultimately will again be glorified through His people, Israel. God always has the motive of restoration and redemptive. God never judges vindictively but always with the desire to see repentance and a return to faith in Him and a life that is pure and holy.

## The Judgement of God 20:45-24:27

We enter a new section here in which the focus is on the judgment God would be bringing upon the people of Judah and the reality that many will not respond to God. The judgments will be difficult and will cause devastation.

### The Fire and the Sword Will Devastate 20:45-21:31

*Ezekiel 20:45–49 (ESV)*

*45 And the word of the LORD came to me: 46 “Son of man, set your face toward the southland; preach against the south, and prophesy against the forest land in the Negeb. 47 Say to the forest of the Negeb, Hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree. The blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from south to north shall be scorched by it. 48 All flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it; it shall not be quenched.” 49 Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! They are saying of me, ‘Is he not a maker of parables?’ ”*

Again the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, and again God called Ezekiel “Son of Man.” Ezekiel was instructed to preach toward the south. This is part of the process of God cleansing the land and purging the land from the people's sins. We should understand “south” and the “forest of the south” speaking of Judah and Jerusalem. God promised that through the fire, the land would be purified.

There is some question about when this purging will take place. Some scholars place this in the purification of the land in the tribulation. But I think it seems to be more appropriately aligned to the purification currently taking place in Israel through the exile of the Jews. The judgment of God on Israel was the beginning of the purification of the land. It is believed that fire is used here as an analogy rather than a literal fire.

This passage closes with Ezekiel expressing his frustration with being rejected and ignored. Even though he was giving the people of Israel in exile the words God gave him, he was frustrated that Israel did not understand and just thought he was giving the parables. He was not being taken seriously. We see in this passage the judgment of sin is a prerequisite to receiving the blessing of God. God had to purify Israel to bless them in the future.

*Ezekiel 21:1–5 (ESV)*

*21 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries. Prophesy against the land of Israel 3 and say to the land of Israel, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am against you and will draw my sword from its sheath and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked. 4 Because I will cut off from you both righteous and wicked, therefore my sword shall be drawn from its sheath against all flesh from*

*south to north. 5 And all flesh shall know that I am the LORD. I have drawn my sword from its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again.*

Again we see that Ezekiel is reporting that the “Word of God” has come to him. We also see God refer to Ezekiel as the “son of man.” God tells Ezekiel to turn and set his face toward Jerusalem. “set your face” does not specifically mean to turn physically but is used to signify that the prophet was bringing words of judgment against a specific location of people groups. So, Ezekiel was being told by God that God was about to give Ezekiel a proclamation of judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. The “sanctuaries” referred to here refer to the temple complex, consisting of the temple courts, the holy place, and the holiest place collectively referred to as the temple.

Ezekiel is told to prophesy against the land of Israel and to tell the people, “thus says the Lord.” Judgment was coming to the people of Israel from God. God said He was “against” them and would bring His sword to cut off both righteous and wicked. It appears that this is a predictive prophecy concerning the Babylonian Army’s invasion of Jerusalem that was still for them the future. God acknowledges that both righteous and wicked will be harmed in the military action by Babylon to take Jerusalem. The illustration here is that it is God’s sword in that it was God’s direction and plan to bring Babylon to bear against Israel. There is also a sense in these verses that God was telling Israel that at least the pagans of Babylon would follow His direction. We also see in the text that God was not going to relent on this punishment, as illustrated by God saying that He had drawn His sword and was not going to put it back again.

*Ezekiel 21:6–7 (ESV)*

*6 “As for you, son of man, groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan before their eyes. 7 And when they say to you, ‘Why do you groan?’ you shall say, ‘Because of the news that it is coming. Every heart will melt, and all hands will be feeble; every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming, and it will be fulfilled,’ ” declares the Lord GOD.*

God further instructs to “groan as with a breaking heart and bitter grief” so that the Jews would hear him. God instructed Ezekiel to act out another “action sermon” by groaning so that the Jews in exile by the Chebar Canal in Babylon could hear and see him and ask about it. God wanted the exiles to ask why Ezekiel was groaning. Ezekiel was directed to respond that he was groaning because the news was coming made him groan. In other words, the bad news was coming. So bad was the news that every heart would melt, and the people would be incapable of fighting back. The people will lose heart, and the people will cower in fear. Punishment is coming, and God’s plan will be completed, declares the Lord.

*Ezekiel 21:8–10 (ESV)*

*8 And the word of the LORD came to me: 9 “Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus says the Lord, say:*

*“A sword, a sword is sharpened*

*and also polished,*

10     *sharpened for slaughter,*

*polished to flash like lightning!*

*(Or shall we rejoice? You have despised the rod, my son, with everything of wood.)*

Again Ezekiel informs us that what follows is direct from God to him. The Lord tells Ezekiel to prophesy and tell the people, “Thus says the Lord.” God then gives Ezekiel the words to a song that actually comes in three stanzas. Those stanzas are 8-10a, 11-12, and 14-17. Dividing these stanzas are interludes focusing on “the rod,” verses 10b, and 13.

In stanza one, the subject is a sword of God’s judgment, polished and sharpened for duty. A sword was not polished to look good but to make it more effective simply. By polishing a sword, it flows through the cut cleaner and with less resistance. By sharpening the sword, it cuts quickly and cleanly. A polished and sharp sword is the most effective weapon in the hands of a soldier they can have at the time.

God’s judgment on Israel would not spare the leadership. The leadership was responsible for leading Israel away from God and not following Him. The sword was coming because the leadership had failed to lead the people properly.

*Ezekiel 21:11–13 (ESV)*

*11 So the sword is given to be polished, that it may be grasped in the hand. It is sharpened and polished to be given into the hand of the slayer. 12 Cry out and wail, son of man, for it is against my people. It is against all the princes of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with my people. Strike therefore upon your thigh. 13 For it will not be a testing—what could it do if you despise the rod?” declares the Lord GOD.*

In the second stanza, we see that judgment was coming through the polished and sharpened sword that would be used against the princes of Israel and the people themselves. As we have seen, the leaders failed Israel in that they did not lead Israel in following God. As a result of the failure, they, along with Israel, would be punished. We know that Babylon ended the monarchy of Judah, and it will not return until Jesus rises to the throne of David in Jerusalem for the Millennium.

*Ezekiel 21:14–17 (ESV)*

*14 “As for you, son of man, prophesy. Clap your hands and let the sword come down twice, yes, three times, the sword for those to be slain. It is the sword for the great slaughter, which surrounds them, 15 that their hearts may melt, and many stumble. At all their gates I have given the glittering sword. Ah, it is made like lightning; it is taken up for slaughter. 16 Cut sharply to the right; set yourself to the left, wherever your face is directed. 17 I also will clap my hands, and I will satisfy my fury; I the LORD have spoken.”*

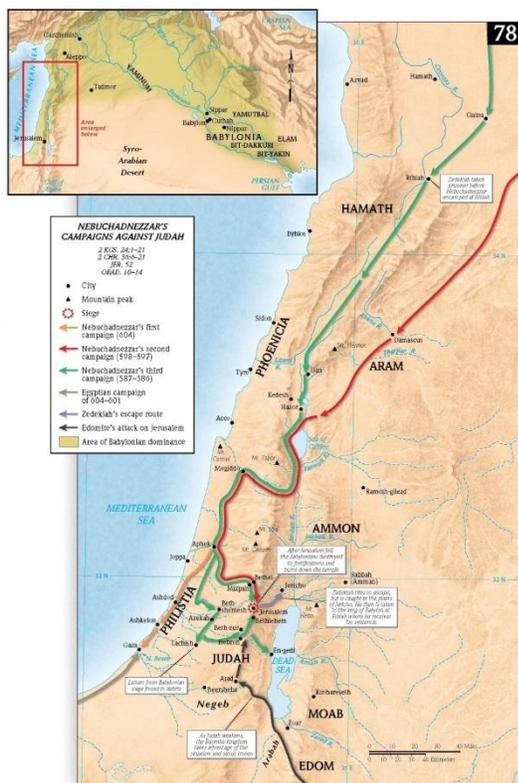
In the third stanza, God directs Ezekiel to clap his hands and let the sword come down twice, even three times. Many scholars believe that Ezekiel was acting out these actions with a real sword. So, he was told to clap his hands and get everyone’s attention and then strike the sword on something three times. The picture is of one standing there with a sword in his hands and striking a tree or some object three times with great force. Of course, this reflects the campaigns by Babylon against Judah.

*Ezekiel 21:18–23 (ESV)*

*18 The word of the LORD came to me again: 19 “As for you, son of man, mark two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come. Both of them shall come from the same land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to a city. 20 Mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites and to Judah, into Jerusalem the fortified. 21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination. He shakes the arrows; he consults the teraphim; he looks at the liver. 22 Into his right hand comes the divination for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth with murder, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build siege towers. 23 But to them it will seem like a false divination. They have sworn solemn oaths, but he brings their guilt to remembrance, that they may be taken.*

Again we see Ezekiel state that he was bringing to the people the Word of God that had received from God. God carries the analogy of the sword, but this time the sword is in the hand of the

King of Babylon. God is telling Judah that the King of Babylon will come against Judah. Ezekiel was again given the job of providing a physical sign to the exiles.



Ezekiel was told to construct a road with a fork to reflect the king's decision in the fight against Judah. One direction Nebuchadnezzar could go would be to go against Rabbah of the Ammonites, and the other road leads to Jerusalem and Judah. The king of Judah had been a vassal of Babylon, but in 588BC, he rebelled and became one of three cities seeking freedom from Babylon, the other two being Tyre and Ammon. Nebuchadnezzar responded to these cities by sending his forces northwest along the Euphrates River toward Riblah, north of Damascus. It was at that point that he had to make a decision on which nation and city to attack first. Even though Babylon was directly East of Israel, travel from Babylon to Israel was most often made by going north along the Euphrates River and then south. Most of the territory

between Israel and Babylon was desert and quite difficult to make passage through. By the time Babylonia forces had gone far enough NorthWest to pass the desert and begin the SouthWest leg of the trip, they quickly needed to decide which city to head towards first. From Riblah, Nebuchadnezzar could go straight west to Tyre or take one of two southbound roads. One would lead to Ammon via the Transjordanian highway. Or the other road, the coastal road, which leads to Jerusalem.

We know that the Babylonian war council met at Riblah, near the fork in the road, to decide which road to take. They could not decide which way to go, so they had to consult their gods. Nebuchadnezzar used three different means to determine the direction they should continue. He cast lots with arrows. It is believed that marked arrows would be placed in a quiver and shaken up. One of the marked arrows would be selected from the quiver, which would provide direction. The Babylonians also prayed and requested direction from their gods. The final method used by the Babylonians involved using a liver from an animal that had been sacrificed. They would read the lines in the liver. This is known as hepatoscopy.

*Ezekiel 21:24–27 (ESV)*

*24 “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have made your guilt to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand. 25 And you, O profane wicked one, prince of Israel, whose day has come, the time of your final punishment, 26 thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. 27 A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him.*

Because of the sins of the people of Judah, they would be taken captive. They felt secure in Jerusalem, but eventually, it would not stand against the forces of Babylon. They would be taken in chains into captivity in Babylon. Israel had violated the covenant with God, which promised them punishment if they violated the covenant and promised them blessing if they kept the covenant. Since Israel had repeatedly violated the covenant, it was now time for punishment.

*Ezekiel 21:28–32 (ESV)*

*28 “And you, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach; say, A sword, a sword is drawn for the slaughter. It is polished to consume and to flash like lightning— 29 while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the profane wicked, whose day has come, the time of their final punishment. 30 Return it to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you. 31 And I will pour out my indignation upon you; I will blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and I will deliver you into the hands of brutish men, skillful to destroy. 32 You shall*

*be fuel for the fire. Your blood shall be in the midst of the land. You shall be no more remembered, for I the LORD have spoken.”*

God here gives Ezekiel some more prophecy to bring to the people of Ammon. Since Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians had decided to go against Jerusalem, the Ammonites thought they had escaped. Jerusalem and Ammon, despite being enemies, had been allied against Babylon. When Jerusalem became the location of the attack, they rejoiced.

The word Ezekiel was to pronounce to Ammon was that the polished sword was also coming to them. As we have seen, the polished sword was swift and effective and would be sure against Ammon. God will judge Ammon swiftly and surely.

### Jerusalem’s Sin is Comprehensive 22:1-23:49

*Ezekiel 22:1–5 (ESV)*

*22 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 “And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to her all her abominations. 3 You shall say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time may come, and that makes idols to defile herself! 4 You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time of your years has come. Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. 5 Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you; your name is defiled; you are full of tumult.*

God then asks Ezekiel another rhetorical question. God asks Ezekiel if he will judge the bloody city. This is similar to what God asked in Ezekiel 20:4. It appears that what God was doing was placing Ezekiel in the position to act as the prosecuting attorney who would make public the charges against Judah. Ezekiel would have to declare all the sins of Jerusalem and Judah publically.

The charges God was giving to Ezekiel to declare publically was the Jerusalem had shed blood and had worshiped idols. These sins were in direct opposition to the covenant between Israel and God and the law given by God through Moses. Rather than following and loving Jehovah God, they followed the false gods of the pagan around them. Bloodshed is a reference to human sacrifice that Israel had participated in.

*2 Kings 17:17–18 (ESV)*

*17 And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only.*

The cities and nations outside of Israel knew there was only one God in Israel, but they also knew that Israel improperly worships false gods. They also had seen the violence and bloodshed

in Jerusalem. As a result of the hypocrisy of Jerusalem, the city was the object of scorn and ridicules. That reality is seen in verse 5 of chapter 22.

*Ezekiel 22:6–12 (ESV)*

*6 “Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. 7 Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. 8 You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths. 9 There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you who eat on the mountains; they commit lewdness in your midst. 10 In you men uncover their fathers’ nakedness; in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity. 11 One commits abomination with his neighbor’s wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father’s daughter. 12 In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD.*

In this section, Ezekiel cites the sins God is accusing Judah and Jerusalem of committing. The list is as follows:

Social Injustice	Vs. 7
Apostasy	Vs. 8
Idolatry	Vs. 9
Immorality	Vss. 10-11
Greed	Vs. 12
Forgot God	Vs. 12

This last sin Judah and Jerusalem are accused of appears to be the root of all the other sins; they forgot God. They failed in their relationship with Him and did not follow Him. God responds to this in:

*Ezekiel 23:35 (ESV)*

*35 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring.”*

The sins of Israel were the result of Israel’s failure to remain loyal to God. The God who brought them out of captivity and gave them the promised land. They failed to live up to their commitment and to the law God had given them. Had they followed Him and remained loyal to Him, they would have continued to have been blessed by Him.

*Ezekiel 22:13–16 (ESV)*

*13 “Behold, I strike my hand at the dishonest gain that you have made, and at the blood that has been in your midst. 14 Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it. 15 I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will consume your uncleanness out of you. 16 And you shall be profaned by your own doing in the sight of the nations, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”*

God continues speaking through Ezekiel in bringing charges against Israel and Judah. In verse 13, God speaks out against the “dishonest gain” the people of Israel and Judah have been making. In violating the commands of God, Israel has been profiting. God is so angry at the continued sins of Israel that He is figuratively banging His hands on the desk. The people of Israel had promised to follow the laws God had given yet consistently violated those laws. God will punish them for their sins, and there is nothing they can do about it. God has spoken, and it will come about, just as He has said.

In verse 15, God stated that he would scatter the people out of the land. The agreement that the people of Israel had entered into with God was that they would keep possession of the Promised Land if they remained obedient to God. But if they consistently violated the law, they would eventually be removed from the land. God was being consistent with the agreement and was doing what He said He would do. Israel would be punished for their own sins, just as they had agreed to.

*Ezekiel 22:17–22 (ESV)*

*17 And the word of the LORD came to me: 18 “Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to me; all of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace; they are dross of silver. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20 As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow the fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. 21 I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it. 22 As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD; I have poured out my wrath upon you.”*

Continuing the theme of the sins of Israel, here in verse 18, God describes the people of Israel as “dross.” The ESV word “dross” is the Hebrew word דֶּגֶם (sûg). This word has a root understanding of moving away. It comes from the process of smelting silver and gold. As the metal becomes molten, the impurities which do not melt at the same temperature moves away from the metal and are scooped off the top. What is scooped away from the gold or silver is called “dross.” It is basically worthless garbage. God says that since the people of Jerusalem and Israel have all become dross, they will be gathered together and placed in the furnace and separated, silver from the dross. The Holy from the unholy. God will judge His people.

*Ezekiel 22:23–25 (ESV)*

*23 And the word of the LORD came to me: 24 “Son of man, say to her, You are a land that is not cleansed or rained upon in the day of indignation. 25 The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.*

God continues in His indictment of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. There is some debate about whether God is bringing charges against the prophets or the princes. The context would seem to dictate that “princes” is the appropriate word here rather than “prophet.” In this passage, there appear to be five different groups in Israel: princes, priests, officials, prophets, and finally, the people. If the word in verse 25 is “prophet,” then “prophet” is listed twice, which appears strange. The NIV and its derivatives have “priest” here. The NASB has “prophet.” The Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures uses “prophet.” Scholars remain divided on which is the proper word.

If the proper word is “prophet,” then it is clear that God is talking about the many false prophets that worked in and around Israel throughout the length of Israel’s existence. These false prophets led Israel to follow false gods and idols. These false prophets had led the nation away from following God and Him alone. Not only had these false prophets/priests led people away from God, but in doing that, people had died, and more will die.

*Ezekiel 22:26–31 (ESV)*

*26 Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. 27 Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. 28 And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,’ when the LORD has not spoken. 29 The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice. 30 And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. 31 Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord GOD.”*

God moves on then in His indictment to speak of priests. God accuses the priests of breaking the law, specifically the separation between clean and unclean, holy and unholy. God had made it clear throughout the Hebrew Scriptures that there is a clear separation between clean and unclean, holy and unholy. These statements defined what God holds as a basic principle, His holiness, and man's sinfulness after Adam’s fall.

The spiritual leadership of Israel also failed to lead Israel in following the law, including that of the Sabbath. I believe that “Sabbath” here involves more than just the one day a week as prescribed in

*Exodus 20:8–11 (ESV)*

*8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

to include the year of Jubilee as seen in

*Leviticus 25:12–17 (ESV)*

*12 For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.*

*13 “In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. 14 And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another. 15 You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. 16 If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of the crops that he is selling to you. 17 You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God.*

The Jewish leadership had failed to keep the commandments of God, as well as the Sabbath year. The year of Jubilee was designed to keep the system such that Israel had to depend on God and not themselves while at the same time maintaining proper sabbatical principles. The year of Jubilee was followed only a few times within Israel’s history; it was most often ignored. This allowed some people to build up fortunes while others went into poverty. Some people gained control of large tracts of land while others lost their land—all in conflict with God’s direction.

*Ezekiel 23:1–4 (ESV)*

*23 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. 3 They played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and their virgin bosoms handled. 4 Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.*

Again we see God speak to Ezekiel, calling him the “son of man.” God then directs Ezekiel to two women, a mother and daughter, an analogy representing Jerusalem and Samaria. The older was named Oholah, and the younger was named Ohilibah. Oholah means “her tent,” while Ohilibah means “my tent is in her.” The word tent is often associated with God’s Sanctuary, the tabernacle. Oholah represents Samaria, the capital of Israel, the ten northern tribes, while Oholibah represents Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, the southern tribes. Most Jews, when they hear the word tent, would have first thought of the tabernacle.

God accuses these women of being prostitutes in Egypt and being engaged in prostitution since their youth. God is accusing both Israel and Judah of not being faithful to Him and following the gods of Egypt, along with the other nations around Israel.

*Ezekiel 23:5–10 (ESV)*

*5 “Oholah played the whore while she was mine, and she lusted after her lovers the Assyrians, warriors 6 clothed in purple, governors and commanders, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. 7 She bestowed her whoring upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them, and she defiled herself with all the idols of everyone after whom she lusted. 8 She did not give up her whoring that she had begun in Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her and handled her virgin bosom and poured out their whoring lust upon her. 9 Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hands of the Assyrians, after whom she lusted. 10 These uncovered her nakedness; they seized her sons and her daughters; and as for her, they killed her with the sword; and she became a byword among women, when judgment had been executed on her.*

We know from history that the northern tribes, known as Israel, had attempted to make peace with Assyria, even becoming a vassal state of Assyria. They did this because the location of both Israel and Judah was directly affected by the actions of the large, powerful nations in the region. Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt frequently fought each other. Israel and Judah stood in the path of these nations fighting each other. Since these warring armies frequently traveled through Israel and Judah, it was natural for Israel and Judah to pick sides, hoping they would not be trampled in the battle. King David defended Israel from the enemies and trusted God. Beginning with King Solomon, treaties were the norm.

Israel, led by Samaria, never had a good relationship with God. Israel never trusted God fully to care for her, and none of her leaders led the people in following God. When Assyria became, really strong Israel welcomed Assyria in, including their soldiers and their gods. The religious system in Israel that followed was a mixture of Mosaic Law and idolatry.

*2 Kings 17:6–15 (ESV)*

*6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

*7 And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods 8 and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. 9 And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 11 and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, 12 and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this.” 13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”*

*14 But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them.*

This passage describes what Israel looked like leading up to and including being taken into captivity by Assyria. Israel had surrendered their sovereignty and blindly followed a pagan people.

*Ezekiel 23:11–13 (ESV)*

*11 “Her sister Oholibah saw this, and she became more corrupt than her sister in her lust and in her whoring, which was worse than that of her sister. 12 She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and commanders, warriors clothed in full armor, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men. 13 And I saw that she was defiled; they both took the same way.*

When Assyria took Israel into captivity, Judah and Jerusalem saw what was happening. But Judah did not learn the lesson and quickly became as evil and perhaps even more evil than Israel. Judah attempted a treaty with Assyria to prevent Assyria from encroaching further into Judah. When Assyria took Israel, they made incursions into Judah and took several northern Judean cities. The treaty was to prevent them from going further and to get some of the cities back.

The treaty with Assyria helped for a short while, but then Assyria attacked Judah again but was only stopped in the outskirts of Jerusalem by an angel of God. (Isaiah 36-37, 2 Kings 18-19). This attack by Assyria was God’s warning to King Hezekiah about letting the people of Judah follow the sinful example of Israel.

*Ezekiel 23:14–21 (ESV)*

*14 But she carried her whoring further. She saw men portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion, 15 wearing belts on their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them having the appearance of officers, a likeness of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea. 16 When she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. 17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoring lust. And after she was defiled by them, she turned from them in disgust. 18 When she carried on her whoring so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, as I had turned in disgust from her sister. 19 Yet she increased her whoring, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt 20 and lusted after her lovers there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses. 21 Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom and pressed your young breasts.”*

Judah should have responded to God’s protection of them, but they did not. Rather than turn back to God, King Hezekiah turned from the Assyrians to the Babylonians for protection. (Isaiah 39) Babylon was growing in power and influence at this time, and it appears that Hezekiah thought that siding with Babylon would provide him with the best protection. Kings after Hezekiah relied on Babylon to keep Egypt in check. Through this process, Judah became a vassal state of Babylon without Babylon taking any military action. As Babylon became more involved in Judean life, Judah became more and more idolatrous. The end result of this was, in many ways, Judah was more corrupt than Israel.

*Ezekiel 23:22–27 (ESV)*

*22 Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I will stir up against you your lovers from whom you turned in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side: 23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, desirable young men, governors and commanders all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. 24 And they shall come against you from the north with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples. They shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their judgments. 25 And I will direct my jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in fury. They shall cut off your nose and your ears, and your survivors shall fall by the sword. They shall seize your sons and your daughters, and your survivors shall be devoured by fire. 26 They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels. 27 Thus I will put an end to your lewdness and your whoring begun in the land of Egypt, so that you shall not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.*

The logic of this passage says that if God punished Samaria/Israel for her sins, and since Judah sinned more than Israel, then Judah must also be punished for her sins. As we move into this section, we find that Ezekiel delivers four oracles from the Lord.

The first of these oracles concern God bringing Babylon against Judah in punishment of Judah. Judah had entered into an agreement with Babylon, as shown by God calling Babylon Judah's lover. Rather than turn to God for protection, Judah turned to Babylon. So it is fitting that God would then use Babylon to punish Judah.

In the oracle, Ezekiel describes the fascination Judah had with Babylon and her military. God continues the analogy by describing the relationship between Babylon and Judah to be like the lust of illicit relationships. God also says that Judah and Jerusalem will not escape when Babylon's well-dressed and well-organized military approaches Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 23:28–31 (ESV)*

*28 “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate, into the hands of those from whom you turned in disgust, 29 and they shall deal with you in hatred and take away all the fruit of your labor and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whoring shall be uncovered. Your lewdness and your whoring 30 have brought this upon you, because you played the whore with the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. 31 You have gone the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand.*

This second oracle repeats many of the same points as the first oracle. This oracle adds that when Babylon was done, Judah and Jerusalem would be left naked and bare. Because Judah followed other gods and other peoples, they would be punished and left with nothing. Since Judah sinned like her sister Israel, she would be punished in a similar way. The last phrase tells Judah that she will receive the same punishment that Israel had received.

*Ezekiel 23:32–34 (ESV)*

*32 Thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“You shall drink your sister’s cup*

*that is deep and large;*

*you shall be laughed at and held in derision,*

*for it contains much;*

*33 you will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow.*

*A cup of horror and desolation,*

*the cup of your sister Samaria;*

34 you shall drink it and drain it out,  
and gnaw its shards,  
and tear your breasts;

*for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD.*

The third oracle of Judgement against Jerusalem differs some from the previous two in its genre. This oracle is presented as a poem rather than the narrative or the last two. God states again that Judah will drink the same drink as Israel did. God also says that Judah will be humiliated and held in derision. They would [ay the price for their sin.

*Ezekiel 23:35 (ESV)*

*35 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring.”*

This verse contains the fourth oracle from God against Israel and Jerusalem. Jerusalem had forgotten about God, and as a result, Jerusalem will bear the consequences of her sinfulness.

*Ezekiel 23:36–42 (ESV)*

*36 The LORD said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Declare to them their abominations. 37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. With their idols they have committed adultery, and they have even offered up to them for food the children whom they had borne to me. 38 Moreover, this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my Sabbaths. 39 For when they had slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. And behold, this is what they did in my house. 40 They even sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and behold, they came. For them you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments. 41 You sat on a stately couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed my incense and my oil. 42 The sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and with men of the common sort, drunkards were brought from the wilderness; and they put bracelets on the hands of the women, and beautiful crowns on their heads.*

Again God calls Ezekiel the son of man and asks him the rhetorical question if he will judge the sisters Oholah and Oholibah. Then God lists the charges against the sisters, Israel and Judah. God says they have committed adultery in that they followed false gods and not the one true God. In their idolatry, they offered sacrifices to these false gods, even sacrificing their own children. They have even had offered sacrifices to these false gods in the temple in Jerusalem. By offering their children, they clearly became unclean, but that did not stop them from entering the

temple and offering other sacrifices. They called false teachers from distant lands to lead them and teach them rather than learn and live God's word they already had.

*Ezekiel 23:43–49 (ESV)*

*43 “Then I said of her who was worn out by adultery, ‘Now they will continue to use her for a whore, even her!’ 44 For they have gone in to her, as men go in to a prostitute. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, lewd women! 45 But righteous men shall pass judgment on them with the sentence of adulteresses, and with the sentence of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands.”*

*46 For thus says the Lord GOD: “Bring up a vast host against them, and make them an object of terror and a plunder. 47 And the host shall stone them and cut them down with their swords. They shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses. 48 Thus will I put an end to lewdness in the land, that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done. 49 And they shall return your lewdness upon you, and you shall bear the penalty for your sinful idolatry, and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.”*

Judah had worn herself out in chasing after other nations and other gods. In going after false gods, the sins of Israel and Judah were something that God could not and would not accept. God says that “righteous men” will judge and sentence the sisters. But who are these “righteous men?” there is no way God could be referring to the nations that brought God's judgment on the nations as they themselves were not righteous.

The best understanding of the “righteous men” refers to the Prophets of God, who continued to speak for God. I believe that this includes the Old Testament prophets that had already come and gone, the contemporary prophets, and future New Testament Prophets. Who all spoke out against Israel and Judah spoke for God.

### [Sure is the Judgment 24:1-27](#)

Chapter 24 concludes the third in the series of judgments on Judah. The previous judgments were seen in chapters 4-11, 12-19, 20-24.

*Ezekiel 24:1–2 (ESV)*

*24 In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.*

Judah's final prophecy of judgment comes in the ninth year, the tenth month, and the tenth day of King Jehoiachin's exile in Babylon. That translates to January 15, 588 BC. It was on this day that Babylon began its final attack on Jerusalem. It is also the day that Ezekiel warned the Jews in Exile about for over four years. This event is also referenced in:

*2 Kings 25:1 (ESV)*

*25 And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it.*

Jeremiah also wrote about this day:

*Jeremiah 39:1 (ESV)*

*39 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it.*

*Jeremiah 52:4 (ESV)*

*4 And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it.*

This is a pivotal day in the history of Israel and can only be paralleled by 70AD when General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

*Ezekiel 24:3–5 (ESV)*

*3 And utter a parable to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“Set on the pot, set it on;*

*pour in water also;*

*4 put in it the pieces of meat,*

*all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder;*

*fill it with choice bones.*

*5 Take the choicest one of the flock;*

*pile the logs under it;*

*boil it well;*

*seethe also its bones in it.*

God provides Ezekiel with a parable to tell the people of Israel that highlights the reality that the people held up in Jerusalem would not be protected. Many people believed that by being in

Jerusalem with the gates closed, they would be protected. The walls and gates of Jerusalem for formidable, and they thought sufficient to protect them, even from Nabudchadnezzar and Babylon. But, as God tells them through the parable, they will not be safe and protected. The pot in the parable is a reference to inside the walls of Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 24:6–8 (ESV)*

*6 “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose corrosion is in it, and whose corrosion has not gone out of it! Take out of it piece after piece, without making any choice. 7 For the blood she has shed is in her midst; she put it on the bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground to cover it with dust. 8 To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have set on the bare rock the blood she has shed, that it may not be covered.*

I think it is interesting that in this passage and then later in 9-14, Ezekiel begins with reference to the sovereign Lord and what He says. Ezekiel is making sure that the exiled people hearing his prophecy understand that the sovereign Lord, the one who is truly in control of everything, is the one that has determined that they will not fair well in Jerusalem. There is nothing that they can do to alter what the sovereign God is going to do.

God describes Jerusalem, in this parable, as a pot encrusted or covered with rust. There is nothing that could be done to hide the corruption of the people of Jerusalem and Israel; it was all exposed by God. In keeping with the analogy of the parable, the meal in the pot was no longer edible and had to be poured out. Of course, this is a reference to the removal of Israel from the land for the violation of the covenant with God. God will shed blood as Israel is taken into exile.

*Ezekiel 24:9–14 (ESV)*

*9 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city! I also will make the pile great. 10 Heap on the logs, kindle the fire, boil the meat well, mix in the spices, and let the bones be burned up. 11 Then set it empty upon the coals, that it may become hot, and its copper may burn, that its uncleanness may be melted in it, its corrosion consumed. 12 She has wearied herself with toil; its abundant corrosion does not go out of it. Into the fire with its corrosion! 13 On account of your unclean lewdness, because I would have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you. 14 I am the LORD. I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it. I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord GOD.”*

Not only will God direct Babylon to attack the city, but it will destroy the city, the bloody city. The parable continues the picture of the meat is well cooked, indicating a slaughter of those left in the city. The attack will, in effect, cleanse the city of the filth of the sin of her inhabitants.

In verse 14, God clarifies that nothing can be done; it will come to pass since He has said it. He will not relent. Judgment is coming! Israel had resisted every attempt God had made in the past

to be corrected and returned to the path God had told them to walk in. God had grace and patience on the people of Israel, but now His patience had run out, the punishment was here.

*Ezekiel 24:15–17 (ESV)*

*15 The word of the LORD came to me: 16 “Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. 17 Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.”*

This is one of the most difficult passages to read without emotion. God tells Ezekiel that the love of his life, his wife, will die that day. As bad and difficult, that is, God also told Ezekiel that he was to not mourn over his wife’s death. All Ezekiel could do was sigh but not aloud. He was not to do anything that would alert people to his mourning.

*Ezekiel 24:18–19 (ESV)*

*18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.*

*19 And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?”*

Ezekiel prophesied to the people in the morning and that night, his wife died. As commanded, the next morning, Ezekiel continued his ministry to the people without public mourning. The exiles in Babylon asked him what these things meant.

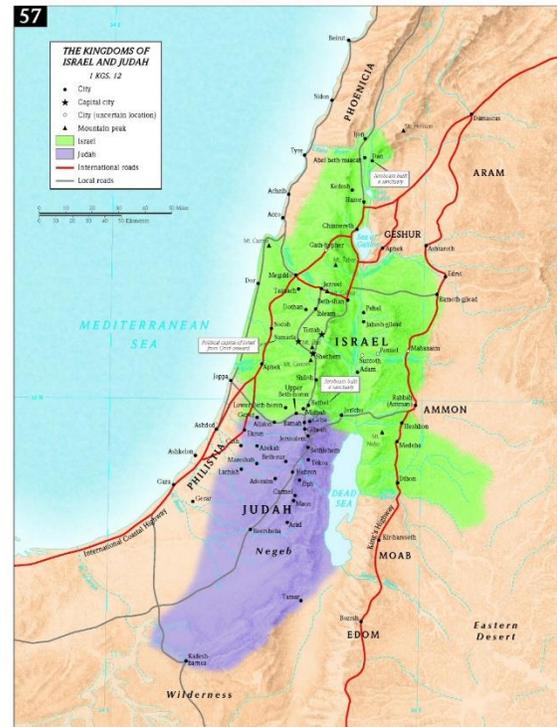
*Ezekiel 24:20–24 (ESV)*

*20 Then I said to them, “The word of the LORD came to me: 21 ‘Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul, and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. 22 And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. 23 Your turbans shall be on your heads and your shoes on your feet; you shall not mourn or weep, but you shall rot away in your iniquities and groan to one another. 24 Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign; according to all that he has done you shall do. When this comes, then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.’*

## Every Knee Shall Bow 25:1-32:32

Judgment was coming to those nations who rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem, Judah, and previously Israel. The Jews had stood separated from these other nations as God's Chosen People. Many of these foreign nations had been attacked by King David and his son King Solomon and the kings that followed them. These nations now looked at the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem with joy and glee.

The people of Israel had entered into a covenant with God that held the people of Israel would not worship the idols of these foreign nations. But Israel soon turned from following God and began to worship these false idols. As a result of this constant wandering from worship God to worshipping these idols, God was punishing the people of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem. What the nations around did not realize in their glee at the punishment of Jerusalem was not just punishment for the Jews but was also a warning to those foreign nations.



*Proverbs 11:31 (ESV)*

31 *If the righteous is repaid on earth,  
how much more the wicked and the sinner!*

The righteous are the people of Israel. God was punishing His chosen people; the people around Israel should recognize that God was punishing His own people, which means the other nations will certainly be punished as well. This section of Ezekiel deals with the coming punishment of the nations around Israel.

## Judgment on Conspiring Rebels 25:1-17

*Ezekiel 25:1–2 (ESV)*

25 *The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them.*

Ezekiel is again addressed as the “Son of Man.” God directs Ezekiel to set his face against the Ammonites. The Ammonites were the people of Ammon, which was a territory east of the Jordan River. It is roughly equivalent to the modern state of Jordan. The Ammonites traced their history to the younger daughter of Lot. (Gen 19:38) Israel and Ammon had fought each other

often, including Israel taking much of the area of Ammon toward the Jordan before entering the Promised Land west of the Jordan. Despite being blood-related to Israel, there was a long-standing hatred of Israel by the Ammonites.

“Set your face toward” is an ANE saying that implies a focus upon a particular object or location. In other words, God was directing Ezekiel to focus on Ammon and the Ammonites to prophesy against them. God was preparing Ezekiel for what would come next.

*Ezekiel 25:3–5 (ESV)*

*3 Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Because you said, ‘Aha!’ over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when they went into exile, 4 therefore behold, I am handing you over to the people of the East for a possession, and they shall set their encampments among you and make their dwellings in your midst. They shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. 5 I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you will know that I am the LORD.*

Because the people of Ammon rejoiced over the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the removal of the Jews from the land, they, themselves, will be handed over to another people group. The nation of Ammon would be turned over to people further east. East of Ammon were nomadic tribes of people. They would turn the city of Ammon into pastureland and grazing area for their herds.

God intended to reflect the authority He holds over all the nations that no nation can escape from. He wanted those nations to know that He alone was the Lord.

*Ezekiel 25:6–7 (ESV)*

*6 For thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel, 7 therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of the countries; I will destroy you. Then you will know that I am the LORD.*

God further says that because you rejoiced at the fall of the nation of Israel, He has stretched His hand against Ammon. God will hand over Ammon as plunder to other nations. A couple of significant truths we need to see in this exchange. God clearly reminds both the people of Israel and the Gentiles around them that He is sovereign, and as sovereign, He alone determines their fate. The Gentile nations, including Ammon, celebrated at Babylon, conquering Judah and Jerusalem. Because of that, God would also punish the Gentile nations. We also need to see that God’s punishment always comes, even if delayed. Both Judah and the Gentile nations had received grace from God over the years, as God did not execute them when they first sinned. God’s judgment comes at His chosen time to accomplish His chosen purpose. The end result of

God's punishment will be that both the Gentiles and Israel will know that He alone is the Lord God.

*Ezekiel 25:8–11 (ESV)*

*8 “Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Moab and Seir said, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the other nations,’ 9 therefore I will lay open the flank of Moab from the cities, from its cities on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim. 10 I will give it along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, that the Ammonites may be remembered no more among the nations, 11 and I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they will know that I am the LORD.*

Ezekiel quotes God this time in speaking against Moab and Seir. Moab lay directly south of Ammon on the East side of the Dead Sea. The Kings Highway from the south, east, and north passed through the eastern edge of Moab. The Moabites were descendants of Moab, the son of Lot and his oldest daughter. (Deut 2:10) Despite the relationship of Moab to Israel, there was almost always a state of war between the two nations.

The Moabites did not rejoice over the fall of Israel as Ammon did, but they still believed that Judah was like any other nation. Of course, Judah was not like any other nation, and they were God's chosen people. Moab viewed Israel as simply as any other country reveals that the Moabites did not understand the position Israel/Judah had in God's plan. As a result, God added Moab to the list of Gentile nations that would be punished.

Seir was a mountain range south of the Dead Sea. The Nation of Edom lies within the mountain range of Seir. By the time Ezekiel was writing, Seir had become synonymous with Edom. Edom (Seir) was included in this punishment announcement with Moab because they both did not understand Israel/Judah's true importance and position of Israel/Judah. God loves His Chosen People, and anyone that would treat them improperly or demean their position before God will pay the price for that.

Because Moab treated Judah as any other nation and did not hold them in the position they really were to God, God would remove their glory. The glory of Moab was the cities of the northern area of Moab. God exposed the northern cities and made the northern area of Moab vulnerable to attack. To do this, God destroyed these cities. Beth-Jeshimoth, Baal-Meon, and Kiriathaim, all Moabite northern cities, were destroyed. Moab was now easily taken. It did not take long before the tribe people of the east took Moab. The Eastern tribes overran Ammon and now Moab. Again this was so the people would know that God is the Lord.

*Ezekiel 25:12–14 (ESV)*

*12 “Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance on them, 13 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast. And I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. 14 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom*

*by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord GOD.*

In the previous passage, we saw mention of Seir, lumped together with Moab, because they viewed Israel/Judah in the same way. We saw the punishment for Moab, and now Edom referred to as Seir in the previous passage.

Because Edom aided Babylon in their fight against Judah, in effect revenge against Judah, God pronounced punishment against Edom, Edom had taken over some of the lands of the fallen nation around her. When Judah was in the battle with Babylon, Edom came up from the south to occupy southern Judah. God could not and would not let that stand. All of Edom's territory would be laid desolate.

*Ezekiel 25:15–17 (ESV)*

*15 “Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the Philistines acted revengefully and took vengeance with malice of soul to destroy in never-ending enmity, 16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the rest of the seacoast. 17 I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I lay my vengeance upon them.”*

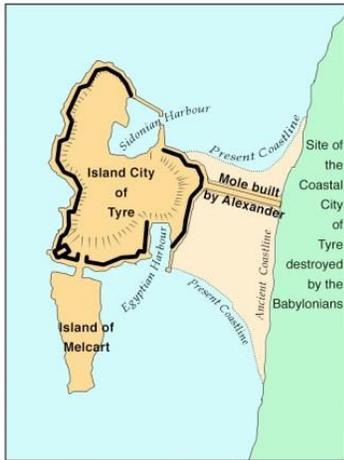
To the west of Judah lies the nation of the Philistines, along what is today referred to as the Gaza Strip. The Philistines had been the enemy of Israel since the earliest days of the conquest of Canaan by Israel. Many scholars believe that had Israel destroyed the small groups of Philistines early in the conquest, they would not have been the problems for Israel they were. The only thing that ended the fighting between the Philistines and Judah was Babylon conquering both nations.

Because Philistia had attempted to destroy Judah, God would destroy Philistia. The word “Cherethites” was a synonym for Philistines. (1 Sam 30:1-14, Zeph 2:5) this word indicates the origin of the Philistines, which were the Greek Islands, including Crete. During the intertestamental period, the period of time from the last writing prophets after the Babylonian Captivity to the events of the New Testament, the Philistines ceased to exist. God said He would destroy them, and He did. Through His judgment on them, they would know that He is the Lord.

## Judgment on Commercial Rival 26:1-28:26

Chapter 25 dealt with four prophecies against four enemies. Then in chapter 26, Ezekiel begins three chapters of prophecies against just one city, Tyre. These three chapters are presented in four oracles, each beginning with “The Word of the Lord came to me.” The first oracle (26:2-21) is a prophecy concerning the destruction of Tyre. The second oracle (Chapter 27) is a lament or funeral dirge for Tyre, which had fallen. The third and fourth oracles focus on the rule of Tyre in chapter 28; the third oracle is found in (28:1-10) and the fourth in (28:11-19). It should be noted that Ezekiel gives more attention to Tyre than any other Old Testament Prophet.

Tyre was the leading city of the Phoenicians and was on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, north of Israel. As you can see from this diagram, this city was quite simple to protect. Well, at least the main fortress was as it was on an Island ½ mile offshore. The rest of the city was on the mainland and was not quite as well protected. Alexander the Great had built up the city fortifications after he had destroyed the city.



Alexander was not permitted to enter the city to worship Hercules, also known as Melqart, by the Phoenicians. It took seven months to defeat Tyre, but Alexander built the causeway between the mainland and Tyre's island. Tyre remained belligerent with Alexander and quickly regained its defenses. So much so that 18 years later, after Alexander's death, Antigonus, one of Alexander's generals, took 15 months to subdue Tyre again.

Assyria had subdued Tyre in 722 BC after a five-year siege. During this siege, the Island portion of the city was never conquered. Over the next 100 plus years, Egypt and Assyria attempted to maintain control of the city due to its strategic importance. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege on the city for thirteen years but never conquered the Island portion of the city.

The fact that these great armies could not wholly take the city left Tyre with arrogance and pride. Tyre also was indifferent to the suffering of people around the Phoenicia. This arrogance and indifference would play a large role in the prophecy against Tyre.

Tyre had been a very wealthy city as one of the primary shipping ports used to carry goods from the east toward the west. It later lost much of its prominence when Ptolemy II Philadelphus, a successor to Alexander the Great, rerouted trade traffic through Alexandria in Egypt. That resulted in Alexandria becoming wealthy and Tyre declining in wealth and importance.

*Ezekiel 26:1–2 (ESV)*

*26 In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Son of man, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, 'Aha, the gate of the peoples is broken; it has swung open to me. I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste,'*

Tyre was still strong at the time that Ezekiel wrote the Words of the Lord. The prophecy Ezekiel brings concerning Tyre centered on Tyre's reality at the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem. Ezekiel received this prophecy in the year 587 or 586. Ezekiel does not give us the month, just the day of the month and the year. Many scholars believe that the month is the eleventh month, which would make the date February 13, 586 BCE. Other scholars believe that it was the twelfth month making the date March 15, 586 BCE,

It should be noted that this was not the destruction of Jerusalem that Tyre was celebrating but the breach of the walls. Ezekiel 33:21 reminds us that the destruction of Jerusalem did not come until the twelfth year of the Babylonian captivity.

The people of Tyre assumed that since Babylon had taken Jerusalem that their own prosperity would increase. They had resisted Babylon, but Jerusalem fell. That had to be good for them, they thought.

*Ezekiel 26:3–6 (ESV)*

*3 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. 4 They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. 5 She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. And she shall become plunder for the nations, 6 and her daughters on the mainland shall be killed by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD.*

The fact that Tyre was happy at the fall of Jerusalem resulted in the Lord being against Tyre. In fact, God says, He will bring many nations against Tyre. Tyre will fall, and the city will be destroyed. The end result will be that Tyre will be leveled. The protection of the island fortress will end, which of course, we know happened as Alexander the Great built the causeway. With the Island fortress falling, there is no hope to protect the rest of the people of the region.

*Ezekiel 26:7–14 (ESV)*

*7 “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and a host of many soldiers. 8 He will kill with the sword your daughters on the mainland. He will set up a siege wall against you and throw up a mound against you, and raise a roof of shields against you. 9 He will direct the shock of his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers. 10 His horses will be so many that their dust will cover you. Your walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen and wagons and chariots, when he enters your gates as men enter a city that has been breached. 11 With the hoofs of his horses he will trample all your streets. He will kill your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will fall to the ground. 12 They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters. 13 And I will stop the music of your songs, and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more. 14 I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall never be rebuilt, for I am the LORD; I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD.*

This passage focuses on the Babylonian attack on Tyre led by Nebuchadnezzar. This attack lasted 13 years, from 586 to 573 BCE. Ezekiel specifically names Nebuchadnezzar in verse 7. Verses 13 and 14 speak of something that Nebuchadnezzar could not accomplish but was accomplished by Alexander the Great, the fall of the island fortress.

There are a few specific things we need to see in this pericope. In verse 7, Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as “king of kings. This is a reference to the reality that under Nebuchadnezzar, there were many vassal kings, including the king of Judah and the king of Tyre. Many kings in his kingdom were all subservient to Nebuchadnezzar.

Verses 8-10 refer to the isolation the island fortress had as Babylon had subdued the mainland portion of the city of Tyre and the remainder of the region. The fall of the strong pillars in verse 11 references the pillars of the temple to Melkart (Hercules). The Greek historian Herodotus speaks of the fall of the temple and the leadership in the island fortress. There is also the potential that the strong pillars may reference the siege towers used by Alexander the Great. He used the largest and tallest siege towers ever used in war to access the island fortress. Alexander moved these siege towers over the causeway he built from the mainland. When those towers came down, it meant Alexander forces had gained access to the city.

*Ezekiel 26:15–18 (ESV)*

*15 “Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: Will, not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter is made in your midst?  
16 Then all the princes of the sea will step down from their thrones and remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground and tremble every moment and be appalled at you. 17 And they will raise a lamentation over you and say to you,*

*“ ‘How you have perished,*

*you who were inhabited from the seas,*

*O city renowned,*

*who was mighty on the sea;*

*she and her inhabitants imposed their terror*

*on all her inhabitants!*

*18 Now the coastlands tremble*

*on the day of your fall,*

*and the coastlands that are on the sea*

*are dismayed at your passing.’*

“Coastlands” refers to the surrounding mainland areas around Tyre and the region. They depended on the security provided to the region through the strength of the island fortress. The mainland or coastlands were under the control of Tyre. They eventually fell, and then the island fortress fell. Verses 17-18 form a lament or funeral dirge for the destruction of Tyre. You should notice in your text that verses 17-18 are arranged in the genre format of poetry or a song. This

song focuses on the fear and uncertainty of those who had depended on Tyre for security and protection, only to see Tyre fall.

*Ezekiel 26:19–21 (ESV)*

*19 “For thus says the Lord GOD: When I make you a city laid waste, like the cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you, 20 then I will make you go down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of old, and I will make you to dwell in the world below, among ruins from of old, with those who go down to the pit, so that you will not be inhabited; but I will set beauty in the land of the living. 21 I will bring you to a dreadful end, and you shall be no more. Though you be sought for, you will never be found again, declares the Lord GOD.”*

Having recorded the funeral dirge for Tyre in the previous section, Ezekiel moves on to the city's internment. The prediction from God through Ezekiel was that eventually, Tyre would be laid waste and completely uninhabited, so much so that the waves would break over the Island.

Ezekiel's imagery changes then to reflect burial in the ground, internment. The island fortress of Tyre would be brought down into the pit. God says that He will bring Tyre to a dreadful end. Tyre would be destroyed, and the result would be that Tyre was never again a force to take or protect the people around the city.

*Ezekiel 27:1–2 (ESV)*

*27 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Now you, son of man, raise a lamentation over Tyre,*

The second oracle begins again with the Word of the Lord came to me. God tells Ezekiel to present another lamentation over the destruction of Tyre.

*Ezekiel 27:3–9 (ESV)*

*3 and say to Tyre, who dwells at the entrances to the sea, merchant of the peoples to many coastlands, thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“O Tyre, you have said,*

*‘I am perfect in beauty.’*

*4 Your borders are in the heart of the seas;*

*your builders made perfect your beauty.*

*5 They made all your planks*

*of fir trees from Senir;*

*they took a cedar from Lebanon*

*to make a mast for you.*

6 *Of oaks of Bashan*

*they made your oars;*

*they made your deck of pines*

*from the coasts of Cyprus,*

*inlaid with ivory.*

7 *Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt*

*was your sail,*

*serving as your banner;*

*blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah*

*was your awning.*

8 *The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad*

*were your rowers;*

*your skilled men, O Tyre, were in you;*

*they were your pilots.*

9 *The elders of Gebal and her skilled men were in you,*

*caulking your seams;*

*all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in you*

*to barter for your wares.*

As we have seen, Tyre was well known for its arrogance and pride. It had been very difficult for the enemy to take the stronghold on the island. The mainland often was taken, but since the government and military were secured in the island fortress, the mainland often was returned to control by Tyre. This led to the arrogance of the city and the towns around on the mainland.

In verse 3, “entrances to the sea” refers to the two ports on the north and south sides of the causeway built by Alexander the Great. The Northern entrance was called the Sidonian entrance, and the Southern entrance was called the Egyptian entrance.

The funeral dirge compares Tyre to a beautiful and perfect merchant ship for the take it was created for. Pine trees from Mt Hermon were used to build many ships, while masts were made from Lebanese cedar trees. The oars of the ships were made from oak from Bashan, and the decks were made with cypress wood from Cyprus and inlaid ivory. Egyptian linen was used for

the sails, as well as for flags and banners. The awnings on the deck were made from purple cloth from Elishah. Elishah is mentioned in Genesis 10:4 as the son of Javan, the founder of maritime nations.

The oarsmen of the ship were from Sidon and Arvad. Both cities of the region and known for their sailors. The pilots, or possibly captains of the ships, were men of Tyre. There were also skilled men from Gebal, also known as Byblos, another maritime power, and shipwrights on board to repair the ships damaged or worn.

It was common to have larger ships offload at sea, with smaller boats coming alongside to offload. As these magnificent larger ships would carry goods to other cities, they often could not access the ports as they were not deep enough. So smaller boats would come out to the boat to offload.

*Ezekiel 28:1–5 (ESV)*

*28 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord God:*

*“Because your heart is proud,  
and you have said, ‘I am a god,  
I sit in the seat of the gods,  
in the heart of the seas,’  
yet you are but a man, and no god,  
though you make your heart like the heart of a god—  
3 you are indeed wiser than Daniel;  
no secret is hidden from you;  
4 by your wisdom and your understanding  
you have made wealth for yourself,  
and have gathered gold and silver  
into your treasuries;  
5 by your great wisdom in your trade  
you have increased your wealth,  
and your heart has become proud in your wealth—*

Here in chapter 28, the prophecy against Tyre turns from the city to the King of Tyre. There is a sense in the passage that the King is seen as a representative of the nation itself. Ezekiel states that Tyre is well known for its skills in the area of trade and commercialism. The ability to trade and do business with many other nations made Tyre very wealthy and prosperous. As a result, pride became a significant issue. As politicians do, the king took personal credit for Tyre's success, which fed his ego, which resulted in his belief that he truly was superior to everyone else. We see the same thing in Tyre a few hundred years later when Herod took credit for the success of the region around Tyre. God ate him up with worms because of his pride.

*Ezekiel 28:6–10 (ESV)*

6 *therefore thus says the Lord God:*

*Because you make your heart*

*like the heart of a god,*

7 *therefore, behold, I will bring foreigners upon you,*

*the most ruthless of the nations;*

*and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom*

*and defile your splendor.*

8 *They shall thrust you down into the pit,*

*and you shall die the death of the slain*

*in the heart of the seas.*

9 *Will you still say, 'I am a god,'*

*in the presence of those who kill you,*

*though you are but a man, and no god,*

*in the hands of those who slay you?*

10 *You shall die the death of the uncircumcised*

*by the hand of foreigners;*

*for I have spoken, declares the Lord God."*

The king of Tyre announced that he was as wise as God. As a result, God told the king that God was sending ruthless nations and their swords against Tyre. These nations will kill the king close to the sea, which is how Tyre made its fortunes.

*Ezekiel 28:11–19 (ESV)*

*11 Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me: 12 “Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God:*

*“You were the signet of perfection,  
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

*13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;  
every precious stone was your covering,  
sardius, topaz, and diamond,  
beryl, onyx, and jasper,  
sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle;  
and crafted in gold were your settings  
and your engravings.*

*On the day that you were created  
they were prepared.*

*14 You were an anointed guardian cherub.  
I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;  
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.*

*15 You were blameless in your ways  
from the day you were created,  
till unrighteousness was found in you.*

*16 In the abundance of your trade  
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;  
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,  
and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub,  
from the midst of the stones of fire.*

*17 Your heart was proud because of your beauty;*

*you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.*

*I cast you to the ground;*

*I exposed you before kings,*

*to feast their eyes on you.*

18 *By the multitude of your iniquities,*

*in the unrighteousness of your trade*

*you profaned your sanctuaries;*

*so I brought fire out from your midst;*

*it consumed you,*

*and I turned you to ashes on the earth*

*in the sight of all who saw you.*

19 *All who know you among the peoples*

*are appalled at you;*

*you have come to a dreadful end*

*and shall be no more forever.”*

God instructs Ezekiel to show some lament over the loss of the king of Tyre, a once-powerful leader. Following the typical order of ANE laments, Ezekiel began by stating the “good things” the king did. God describes him as being full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. It should not be difficult to see that this prophecy from Ezekiel has a dual meaning. God says the subject of this section was an anointed guardian cherub on God’s holy mountain. He was created sinless. Sinless until unrighteousness was found in him.

The most common understanding of this section is that God was speaking of Satan. Some scholars believe that God was describing Ethbaal III, a king of Tyre 591-573 BCE. Other scholars believe that God was describing the false god behind Tyre’s success. I would argue that all are real options and even considered together, they are still true. The false god behind the king of Tyre, empowering the king, Ethbaal III, was Satan. I believe that all three are good explanations separately and collectively.

*Ezekiel 28:20–23 (ESV)*

*20 The word of the Lord came to me: 21 “Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against her 22 and say, Thus says the Lord God:*

*“Behold, I am against you, O Sidon,*

*and I will manifest my glory in your midst.*

*And they shall know that I am the Lord*

*when I execute judgments in her*

*and manifest my holiness in her;*

*23 for I will send pestilence into her,*

*and blood into her streets;*

*and the slain shall fall in her midst,*

*by the sword that is against her on every side.*

*Then they will know that I am the Lord.*

Focus then shifts to Sidon, a city most often associated with Tyre. God announces that punishment is coming upon Sidon as well as Tyre. Both a plague and actions by foreign armies would punish Sidon.

*Ezekiel 28:24–26 (ESV)*

*24 “And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord God.*

*25 “Thus says the Lord God: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall dwell in their own land that I gave to my servant Jacob. 26 And they shall dwell securely in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall dwell securely, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God.”*

God then tells Israel that the punishment of the nations around Israel was so that Israel would know that He is God. God would eventually remove the briars and pricking by the nations around Israel so Israel would live in security. Obviously, this has not happened yet, meaning this is a prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled. There is a time in the future when Israel will be the center of the universe and more secure than it has ever been. Of Course, we know this will be during the messianic kingdom.

## Judgment on Consummate Ruler 29:1-32:32

*Ezekiel 29:1 (ESV)*

*29 In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me:*

A detail-oriented student should notice that this message is chronologically before the message given in Ezekiel 26:1. In Chapter 26, the message was given in the eleventh year on the first day of an unspecified month. In chapter 29, the message comes from God in the tenth year, in the tenth month, and on the twelfth day. There is no consensus among scholars as to why God had Ezekiel order the oracles in the order that He did. Some would argue that Tyre (Chapter 26) was placed first because the oracle was actually fulfilled first.

In Chapter 29, the message comes again from the Lord in the tenth year, in the tenth month on the twelfth day. Ezekiel proclaims that the Word of the Lord came to him. That would make the date January 7, 587 BCE, about seven months before the fall of Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 29:2 (ESV)*

*2 “Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt;*

God again calls Ezekiel the Son of Man. God tells Ezekiel to set his face against Pharaoh, king of Egypt. As we have already seen, “set your face against” means to be in opposition to, to be against. God was calling Ezekiel to speak out against Egypt.

The Pharaoh in Egypt at this time was Hophra, who ruled Egypt from 589 to 570 BCE. This is the Pharaoh that had an agreement with Judah to defend Judah from Babylon. Of course, that protection did not help, and Judah fell to Babylon.

*Ezekiel 29:3–5 (ESV)*

*3 speak, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“Behold, I am against you,*

*Pharaoh king of Egypt,*

*the great dragon that lies*

*in the midst of his streams,*

*that says, ‘My Nile is my own;*

*I made it for myself.’*

*4 I will put hooks in your jaws,*

*and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales;*

*and I will draw you up out of the midst of your streams,  
with all the fish of your streams  
that stick to your scales.*

*5 And I will cast you out into the wilderness,  
you and all the fish of your streams;  
you shall fall on the open field,  
and not be brought together or gathered.*

*To the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the heavens  
I give you as food.*

These verses form an oracle against Pharaoh Hophrain, the form of judgment poetry. Pharaoh was compared to a monster who claimed the Nile for his own. This is clearly a reference to a crocodile. Hooks in the jaw were the typical way of catching crocodiles in Egypt. God says He will take this crocodile and through it into the desert, which would be certain death for the crocodile along with the fish from the river.

The word used here for crocodile was also used to describe a monster in Semitic mythology viewed as the chaos monster. Babylonian mythology held that this chaos monster was destroyed at creation. Since Ezekiel was in Babylon, it is possible he had the chaos monster and the crocodile in view. In either case, the crocodile symbolized the power and strength of Egypt. Pharaohs were considered gods in Egypt, and Egyptians believed the Pharaoh could and probably did kill the chaos monster. But in our text, God calls the pharaoh the monster.

Judgment was coming against Egypt, and despite her perceived strength, God would defeat Egypt, and the pharaoh could not defend against it.

*Ezekiel 29:6–7 (ESV)*

*6 Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD.*

*“Because you have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel, 7 when they grasped you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke and made all their loins to shake.*

The purpose of this judgment on Egypt was so that the inhabitants of Egypt would know that God is the Lord. The phrase “you have been a staff of reed” means that Israel could not trust Egypt to do what they agreed. As we have already seen, Egypt had agreed to aid in protecting Israel from Babylon. But they had failed in actually protecting Israel. Reeds were an essential resource for the Egyptians. They were used for building and protection and other resources such as plumbing. But wet reeds that could bend provided very little resource. When a wet reed was used to stabilize something, it would fall because a wet reed has no strength.

*Ezekiel 29:8–9 (ESV)*

*8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you man and beast, 9 and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD.*

*“Because you said, ‘The Nile is mine, and I made it,’*

Because Egypt did not stand by Israel as it had promised, judgment was coming upon Egypt. God says He will bring a sword upon Egypt and will cut it off from man and beast. God was telling Egypt that the Babylonian army was coming against Egypt and would kill soldiers and horse pulling Egyptian chariots, leaving in the wake desolation so that they would know that God is the Lord.

Egypt thought that the Nile River made them strong and protected the nation. They also thought that Pharaoh, viewed as God, had created the Nile. Their hubris would eventually kill them.

*Ezekiel 29:10–12 (ESV)*

*10 therefore, behold, I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Cush. 11 No foot of man shall pass through it, and no foot of beast shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited forty years. 12 And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated countries, and her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries.*

Because Egypt believed they were protected by the Nile River and thought Pharaoh had created the River and had failed to protect Israel as they had agreed to, God said He was against them and their streams. God also said He would make their nation into an utter wasteland. In verse 10, the description of from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Cush, is equivalent of from Dan to Beersheba in Israel; it speaks of the entire country.

As Nebuchadnezzar would march through Egypt, he would leave a path of desolation that would lay in ruin for more than 40 years. History reveals that Babylon attacked Egypt in 568-567 BCE in fulfillment of this prophecy.

*Ezekiel 29:13–16 (ESV)*

*13 “For thus says the Lord GOD: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered, 14 and I will restore the fortunes of Egypt and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin, and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. 15 It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and never again exalt itself above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will never again rule over the nations. 16 And it shall never again be the reliance of the house of Israel, recalling their iniquity, when they turn to them for aid. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.”*

Here in verse 13, we see the prediction that the destruction will last 40 years. After 40 years, God will gather the Egyptians from the other nations and restore Egypt to a form of her former power and glory. However, God said they would only be a lowly kingdom and never rule over other nations. Israel will learn that they cannot trust Egypt to protect them anymore.

An interesting note: “That they know that I am the Lord” appears 60 times in the book of Ezekiel.

*Ezekiel 29:17–20 (ESV)*

*17 In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 18 “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare, yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor that he had performed against her. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, declares the Lord GOD.*

We are provided another date here in verse 17. In the 27<sup>th</sup> year, the first month on the first day translates to April 26, 571 BCE. This is the latest date given in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel gives it here since it relates to Egypt.

In Jeremiah, we read:

*Jeremiah 25:9 (ESV)*

*9 behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.*

*Jeremiah 27:6 (ESV)*

*6 Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him.*

*Jeremiah 43:13 (ESV)*

*13 He shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt, and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire.’ ”*

These verses tell us that Babylon was controlled by God and acted as God’s servant. As God’s servant Nebuchadnezzar deserved his pay. Since Babylon gained nothing, though, the taking of

Tyre God would provide Nebuchadnezzar with the spoils from Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar has spent 13 years building siege ramps and causeway to take Tyre. But during the building of the causeway and siege ramps, Tyre could ship all its treasures out through the Mediterranean Sea. When Tyre fell, there was no treasure to go to Babylon.

*Ezekiel 29:21 (ESV)*

*21 “On that day I will cause a horn to spring up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”*

God promises the Jews that, at some point, the restoration will come to the house of Israel. Restoration is seen in the horn that springs up for the house of Israel. God said he would provide for the word to come for them to return to Israel to rebuild. Of course, after the Medes and Persian conquered Babylon, Cyrus, the new king, gave the decree for Israel to return to Jerusalem.

God also says that He will open Ezekiel’s mouth is not a response to the forced dumbness of Ezekiel, as seen earlier in Ezekiel. Since this section actually takes place 14 years later than the rest of the end of the book, that dumbness had already been eliminated. It seems that God was reminding Ezekiel that the prophecies He was giving Ezekiel would come true, and when he was writing this, some already had. The issue was that the Jews in Babylon were not taking the word of Ezekiel seriously. But the day would come when everyone would see that the words he spoke came from God and were true and correct.

*Ezekiel 30:1–5 (ESV)*

*A Lament for Egypt*

*30 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“Wail, ‘Alas for the day!’*

*3 For the day is near,*

*the day of the LORD is near;*

*it will be a day of clouds,*

*a time of doom for the nations.*

*4 A sword shall come upon Egypt,*

*and anguish shall be in Cush,*

*when the slain fall in Egypt,*

*and her wealth is carried away,*

*and her foundations are torn down.*

*5 Cush, and Put, and Lud, and all Arabia, and Libya, and the people of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword.*

The Word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel again. This prophecy is undated but is believed to have been at the same time as the previous one, late in the timeline. It pictures the judgment of Egypt in terms of a great storm that will shake the foundations of the land.<sup>29</sup>

The phrase “day of the Lord” here should not be confused with similar statements of eschatological end times. Especially in the Old Testament, “Day of the Lord” references any period of divine judgment, such as the one pictured here for Egypt. All of the lands around Egypt, which Egypt had treaties with, would be of no help to Egypt. The battle would be lost, and there would be no assistance for the nation. Some Scholars argue that verse 5 references Jewish mercenaries who served in the Egyptian army who would provide no protection for Israel.



*Ezekiel 27:10 (ESV)*

*10 “Persia and Lud and Put were in your army as your men of war. They hung the shield and helmet in you; they gave you splendor.*

*Ezekiel 30:6–8 (ESV)*

6     *“Thus says the LORD:*

*Those who support Egypt shall fall,*

*and her proud might shall come down;*

*from Migdol to Syene*

*they shall fall within her by the sword,*

*declares the Lord GOD.*

7     *And they shall be desolated in the midst of desolated countries,*

*and their cities shall be in the midst of cities that are laid waste.*

8     *Then they will know that I am the LORD,*

*when I have set fire to Egypt,*

*and all her helpers are broken.*

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<sup>29</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Reverent*. “Be” Commentary Series. Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor/Cook Communications, 2000.

When God sends Babylon into Egypt, not only will Egypt fall but so will her allies. All of Egypt and her allies will fall. Babylon will gain control of the entire region. Babylon will leave desolate Egypt and the allies.

*Ezekiel 30:9 (ESV)*

*9 “On that day messengers shall go out from me in ships to terrify the unsuspecting people of Cush, and anguish shall come upon them on the day of Egypt’s doom; for, behold, it comes!*

At the southern end of the Nile River, Cush believes it is safe, but God will send a messenger via boats down the Nile to let them know that they are not secure. The destruction will come, and there is nothing they can do to stop it.

*Ezekiel 30:10–12 (ESV)*

*10 “Thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“I will put an end to the wealth of Egypt,  
by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.*

*11 He and his people with him, the most ruthless of nations,  
shall be brought in to destroy the land,  
and they shall draw their swords against Egypt  
and fill the land with the slain.*

*12 And I will dry up the Nile  
and will sell the land into the hand of evildoers;  
I will bring desolation upon the land and everything in it,  
by the hand of foreigners;*

*I am the LORD; I have spoken.*

Ezekiel continues to speak the word of the Lord and tell Egypt that destruction is coming and the wealth of Egypt will be lost. In the ESV, we see the word wealth; in NASB and NIV, we see hordes; and in the New King James, we see multitude. The Enhanced Strongs Lexicon states:

*83 occurrences; AV translates as “multitude” 62 times, “noise” four times, “tumult” four times, “abundance” three times, “many” three times, “store” twice, “company” once, “multiplied” once, “riches” once, “rumbling” once, and “sounding” once. 1 (Qal) murmur, roar, crowd, abundance, tumult, sound.*

*1a sound, murmur, rush, roar. 1b tumult, confusion. 1c crowd, multitude. 1d great number, abundance. 1e abundance, wealth.*<sup>30</sup>

The word seems to have a sense of disruption and noise from large groups of people. But it also is used to speak of abundance, such as an abundance of wealth. Some scholars and translators argue this is a reference to the wealth of Egypt or the large population of Egyptians. Both seem to indicate that Egypt perceived itself as powerful and able to defeat foes around her. But God had other plans. God would send Babylon south on the Nile and take Egypt and Cush as well as all the other allies of Egypt. Neither a large number of people nor a large bank account would hold the day!

*Ezekiel 30:13–19 (ESV)*

*13 “Thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“I will destroy the idols*

*and put an end to the images in Memphis;*

*there shall no longer be a prince from the land of Egypt;*

*so I will put fear in the land of Egypt.*

*14 I will make Pathros a desolation*

*and will set fire to Zoan*

*and will execute judgments on Thebes.*

*15 And I will pour out my wrath on Pelusium,*

*the stronghold of Egypt,*

*and cut off the multitude of Thebes.*

*16 And I will set fire to Egypt;*

*Pelusium shall be in great agony;*

*Thebes shall be breached,*

*and Memphis shall face enemies by day.*

*17 The young men of On and of Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword,*

*and the women shall go into captivity.*

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<sup>30</sup> James Strong, [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon](#) (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).

18     *At Tehaphnehes the day shall be dark,  
when I break there the yoke bars of Egypt,  
and her proud might shall come to an end in her;  
she shall be covered by a cloud,  
and her daughters shall go into captivity.*

19     *Thus I will execute judgments on Egypt.*

*Then they will know that I am the LORD.”*

God says that He will put an end to the idols and images in Memphis. Memphis was the original capital of Egypt and remained a center of Egyptian religious activities. Archeologists have discovered several temples in the ruins of Memphis. We also know there was a rather large colony of Jews in Memphis.

Pathros was a city on the Nile River about midway between Cairo and Aswan. Pathros also was a synonym for Upper Egypt or southern Egypt:

*(ESV)*

*44 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans who lived in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros,*

Pathros may have also been used for all of Egypt.

*Ezekiel 29:14 (ESV)*

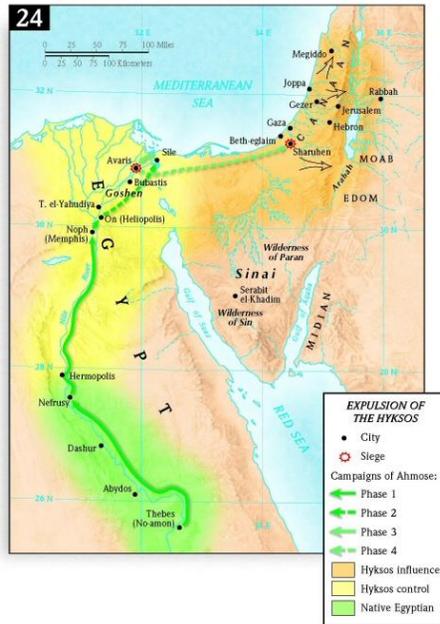
*14 and I will restore the fortunes of Egypt and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin, and there they shall be a lowly kingdom.*

Zoan was a royal residence in the Nile Delta Region. Zoan was also called Tanis and later Thebes, about 400 miles south of Cairo. For reference, this is close to Luxor, the location of the Egyptian Necropolis or burial grounds. This city was destroyed by the Assyrians in 663 BCE but was rebuilt. Jeremiah also predicted the destruction of Thebes.

*Jeremiah 46:25 (ESV)*

*25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, said: “Behold, I am bringing punishment upon Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh and Egypt and her gods and her kings, upon Pharaoh and those who trust in him.*

Pulusium, also known as Sin, was in the Nile Delta region, about 1 mile south of the Mediterranean Sea. This city was one of the major military centers in Egypt. This city stood as a guard over the rest of Egypt close to the entrance to Egypt and the River. Ezekiel calls it the stronghold of Egypt, and he is correct.



Heliopolis was also known as On in lower (Northern) Egypt, just south of the Nile Delta. It also was a major religious center for much of Egypt’s history. Bubastis was northeast of Cairo. It had served briefly as the capital of Egypt. Tahpanhes was located near the modern Suez Canal. Jeremiah talked about it, holding a royal palace.

By Ezekiel naming some of the most important centers in Egypt, Ezekiel reflected that Egypt’s power was going to end, and her wealth would be lost. All of these major cities would be lost when Egypt falls.

*Ezekiel 30:20–26 (ESV)*

*20 In the eleventh year, in the first month, on the seventh day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 21 “Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and behold, it has not been bound up, to heal it by binding it with a bandage, so that it may become strong to wield the sword. 22 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt and will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken, and I will make the sword fall from his hand. 23 I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them through the countries. 24 And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him like a man mortally wounded. 25 I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall. Then they shall know that I am the LORD, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt. 26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”*

Ezekiel brings another prophecy from the Word of the Lord. In fact, this is the fourth of seven prophecies against Egypt. The date of this prophecy is April 29, 587 BCE, making it almost four months after his first prophecy against Egypt. This prophecy speaks about the time that the forces of Egypt went to rescue Israel from Babylon as recorded in:

*Jeremiah 37:4–5 (ESV)*

*4 Now Jeremiah was still going in and out among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison. 5 The army of Pharaoh had come out of Egypt. And when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem.*

Ezekiel states that God said He had broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The timing of this prophecy seems to correspond to the time Nebuchadnezzar was laying siege on Jerusalem but had not yet taken the city. Nebuchadnezzar had to pull his forces from Jerusalem in order to go down into Egypt. By attacking Egypt, Egypt could no longer defend Israel. Egypt had disrupted Egypt and, as a result, broke her arm. No cast or splint would enable Egypt to hold the sword and defend herself.

God then says that He will break both arms of the Pharaoh, which indicates Egypt's strength is broken and eliminated. God will destroy Egypt, and all her ability to defend herself and her allies would be lost.

Even though God would destroy Egypt's power, He would also enhance the power of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon, Egypt's chief foe. The greater defeat was coming for Egypt. When Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt, she would fall, and the people of Egypt would be dispersed throughout the lands. Egypt would follow Judah into exile. In Proclaim 9-1-2021

*Ezekiel 31:1–9 (ESV)*

*31 In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude:*

*“Whom are you like in your greatness?*

*3 Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon,*

*with beautiful branches and forest shade,*

*and of towering height,*

*its top among the clouds.*

*4 The waters nourished it;*

*the deep made it grow tall,*

*making its rivers flow*

*around the place of its planting,*

*sending forth its streams*

*to all the trees of the field.*

5     *So it towered high  
above all the trees of the field;  
       its boughs grew large  
and its branches long  
from abundant water in its shoots.*

6     *All the birds of the heavens  
made their nests in its boughs;  
       under its branches all the beasts of the field  
gave birth to their young,  
       and under its shadow  
lived all great nations.*

7     *It was beautiful in its greatness,  
in the length of its branches;  
       for its roots went down  
to abundant waters.*

8     *The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it,  
nor the fir trees equal its boughs;  
       neither were the plane trees  
like its branches;  
       no tree in the garden of God  
was its equal in beauty.*

9     *I made it beautiful  
in the mass of its branches,  
       and all the trees of Eden envied it,  
that were in the garden of God.*

This message from God to Ezekiel is dated June 21, 586 BC. This is the beginning of the final siege on Jerusalem. We should know that many in Jerusalem were holding out hope that Egypt would still come and rescue Jerusalem. But that would not and could not happen.

Ezekiel records the proclamation against Pharaoh, King of Egypt. In your printed Biblical Text, you should notice that the arrangement of the text indicates that this section is a different genre than the surrounding text. This section is presented as poetry. So Ezekiel is reciting a poem against the king of Egypt. There are some real similarities between what Ezekiel records here and what Isaiah records in Isaiah 14:1-8. Isaiah's prophecy was against Babylon, while Ezekiel's was against Egypt, but the content was very similar. It also is very similar to Daniel's poem against Babylon in Daniel 4:1-37.

This poem begins with a recounting of the fall of the king of Assyria, who is compared to the giant cedars of Lebanon. The cedars of Lebanon were the symbol of power and majesty because of their great height and mass. Assyria had the position of world power until it didn't. In verse 6, the picture of birds nesting in the trees indicates the position that Assyria had held with many smaller nations being subservient to Assyria.

In verse 9, the reference to the Garden of Eden is generally understood to reference the entire world, not just the garden of Eden. I believe that if we view this statement for what it says, the Garden of Eden, we get the understanding that The cedars of Lebanon represent something greater than the greatest trees in the actual garden. Historically speaking, Assyria was the greatest power in world history until that point. So the reference to Eden should be taken literally.

The question is, why does God spend so much time talking about Assyria in a prophecy against Egypt. God was equating the former power of Assyria to the waning power of Egypt.

*Ezekiel 31:10–14 (ESV)*

*<sup>10</sup> “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, <sup>11</sup> I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of the nations. He shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. <sup>12</sup> Foreigners, the most ruthless of nations, have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land, and all the peoples of the earth have gone away from its shadow and left it. <sup>13</sup> On its fallen trunk dwell all the birds of the heavens, and on its branches are all the beasts of the field. <sup>14</sup> All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to towering height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height. For they are all given over to death, to the world below, among the children of man, with those who go down to the pit.*

It was because of Assyria's arrogance and perverted use of power that God judged them. What we know from history is that Assyria was the most powerful nation so far in history. They were also the most brutal. So God brought a force against Assyria that was even more powerful and brutal. So when Assyria fell, so did all the small nations around here that paid tribute to her.

*Ezekiel 31:15–17 (ESV)*

*15 “Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day the cedar went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. 16 I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below. 17 They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.*

God equates the downing of the trees, representing Assyria, with going down into Sheol. Sheol is generally understood as the abode of the dead. It equates to the Greek understanding of Hades. We should not necessarily assume that eternal life or eternal death are in view here, simply the abode of the dead.

*Ezekiel 31:18 (ESV)*

*18 “Whom are you thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? You shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below. You shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword.*

*“This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord GOD.”*

God then brings the prophecy back to Egypt. Who do you think you are compared to Assyria. God took them out; nothing is stopping God from taking you out. This was a message of despair for Judah, just as it was for Egypt. God took out the great Assyria. The only hope Judah thought they had was Egypt, but Egypt would also fall. There was absolutely no hope for Judah. Judah just could not understand that hope and trust in anyone or anything other than God was a false hope and lost cause.

*Ezekiel 32:1 (ESV)*

*32 In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me:*

Now in March 584 BC, nineteen months since the destruction of Jerusalem, another prophecy is given to Ezekiel. This chapter can be divided into two sections. 1-16, and 17-32.

*Ezekiel 32:2–8 (ESV)*

*2 “Son of man, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him:*

*“You consider yourself a lion of the nations,*

*but you are like a dragon in the seas;*

*you burst forth in your rivers,  
trouble the waters with your feet,  
and foul their rivers.*

*3 Thus says the Lord GOD:  
I will throw my net over you  
with a host of many peoples,  
and they will haul you up in my dragnet.*

*4 And I will cast you on the ground;  
on the open field I will fling you,  
and will cause all the birds of the heavens to settle on you,  
and I will gorge the beasts of the whole earth with you.*

*5 I will strew your flesh upon the mountains  
and fill the valleys with your carcass.*

*6 I will drench the land even to the mountains  
with your flowing blood,  
and the ravines will be full of you.*

*7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens  
and make their stars dark;*

*I will cover the sun with a cloud,  
and the moon shall not give its light.*

*8 All the bright lights of heaven  
will I make dark over you,  
and put darkness on your land,  
declares the Lord GOD.*

Ezekiel was to raise another lamentation over Egypt. Remember, we saw this was a passionate expression of grief. Again we see this is presented in the form of poetry. That enables us to be less precise and more symbolic in the understanding of the text.

Egypt saw herself as a powerful nation, perhaps even the most powerful, as illustrated by the lion. But in reality, Egypt is nothing more than a great sea creature netted and placed on the dry ground to rot. Egypt would be overcome by another power that would result in Egypt's blood being spread across the lands. Of course, we know from history that Babylon would take out Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 32:9–16 (ESV)*

*9 “I will trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries that you have not known. 10 I will make many peoples appalled at you, and the hair of their kings shall bristle with horror because of you, when I brandish my sword before them. They shall tremble every moment, every one for his own life, on the day of your downfall.*

*11 “For thus says the Lord GOD: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you. 12 I will cause your multitude to fall by the swords of mighty ones, all of them most ruthless of nations.*

*“They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt,  
and all its multitude shall perish.*

*13 I will destroy all its beasts  
from beside many waters;*

*and no foot of man shall trouble them anymore,  
nor shall the hoofs of beasts trouble them.*

*14 Then I will make their waters clear,  
and cause their rivers to run like oil,  
declares the Lord GOD.*

*15 When I make the land of Egypt desolate,  
and when the land is desolate of all that fills it,  
when I strike down all who dwell in it,  
then they will know that I am the LORD.*

*16 This is a lamentation that shall be chanted; the daughters of the nations shall chant it; over Egypt, and over all her multitude, shall they chant it, declares the Lord GOD.”*

People of the region will be horrified at the destruction of Egypt. If Egypt can fall so will everyone else. There can be no hope. The phrase “daughters of nations shall chant over it” reflects the ANE practice of women choirs who mourned the death of a person.

*Ezekiel 32:17–18 (ESV)*

*17 In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 18 “Son of man, wail over the multitude of Egypt, and send them down, her and the daughters of majestic nations, to the world below, to those who have gone down to the pit:*

Just a few days later, Ezekiel receives another prophecy from God. No matter how dark it seemed to the exiles, the nations that were the agents of their exile would one day pay the price. In truth, all hope was not lost; it just felt that way.

*Ezekiel 32:19 (ESV)*

*19 ‘Whom do you surpass in beauty?*

*Go down and be laid to rest with the uncircumcised.’*

This rhetorical question indicates that Egypt was not more powerful than the other nations. There was nothing they could do; God would do as He wanted with them. The idea that Egypt would be sent to the place of the dead with the uncircumcised indicates that Israel understood they would have a different eternal home than the rest of the world.

*Ezekiel 32:20–23 (ESV)*

*20 They shall fall amid those who are slain by the sword. Egypt is delivered to the sword; drag her away, and all her multitudes. 21 The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: ‘They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.’*

*22 “Assyria is there, and all her company, its graves all around it, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, 23 whose graves are set in the uttermost parts of the pit; and her company is all around her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.*

Egypt would fall by the sword. There is an allusion in these verses in the context that when the Egyptian soldiers fell in battle, they would be buried with their swords under their heads. Those who preceded the Egyptians in Sheol would see them come in, check them out, and speak ill of them. Assyria was already there in the remotest parts of Sheol. That would seem to indicate the depth of depravity that the Assyrians had. The Assyrians had spread terror in the land of the living.

*Ezekiel 32:24–25 (ESV)*

24 *“Elam is there, and all her multitude around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread their terror in the land of the living; and they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit. 25 They have made her a bed among the slain with all her multitude, her graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are placed among the slain.*

Elam was a warring nation east of Babylon. (Gen 14) Elam had been overrun by Assyria and then Babylon, But would eventually regain some independence and become part of the Persian Empire after Babylon fell. The defeated Elamites of the past were in Sheol, welcoming Egypt.

*Ezekiel 32:26–28 (ESV)*

26 *“Meshech-Tubal is there, and all her multitude, her graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; for they spread their terror in the land of the living. 27 And they do not lie with the mighty, the fallen from among the uncircumcised, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose iniquities are upon their bones; for the terror of the mighty men was in the land of the living. 28 But as for you, you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword.*

The exact location and identity of Meshech-Tubal is not known. It is believed to be in the Northern area of eastern and central Turkey. We saw them in chapter 27 and will see them again in chapters 38-39. We know they fought long and hard with Assyria to control the area south of the Black Sea. It appears that the ESV puts the order of words in 27 incorrectly. The original reflects a rhetorical question indicating that Meshech-Tubal does lie in Sheol with the others.

*Ezekiel 32:29–30 (ESV)*

29 *“Edom is there, her kings and all her princes, who for all their might are laid with those who are killed by the sword; they lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the pit.*

30 *“The princes of the north are there, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might; they lie uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.*

God also took out Edom and sent her to Sheol. The princes of the north and all the Sidonians is a reference to the Phoenicians. They also had been removed from the scene by God.

*Ezekiel 32:31–32 (ESV)*

31 *“When Pharaoh sees them, he will be comforted for all his multitude, Pharaoh and all his army, slain by the sword, declares the Lord GOD. 32 For I*

*spread terror in the land of the living; and he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword, Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord GOD.”*

In a perverted sense of justice, Pharaoh would be comforted by seeing all these other nations in Sheol when he gets to Sheol. The last to fall, but still fallen.

## The Lord is My Shepherd 33:1-34:31

This next section of the prophecy of Ezekiel, which covers chapters 33 and 34, focuses on the hope Ezekiel had for restoration. It is in this section that Ezekiel begins to announce messages of hope for the people of Israel.

### Role of a Watchman 33:1-20

*Ezekiel 33:1–6 (ESV)*

*33 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, 3 and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4 then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5 He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. 6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.*

Again God speaks to Ezekiel and tells him what to say to the people of Israel exiled in Babylon. Notice that God again calls Ezekiel the “son of man,” which He does throughout the book. This section parallels what Ezekiel wrote in Ezekiel 3:16-21. Vs. 1-6 presents to Israel the principle of the watchman. The idea and concept of the watchman would have been well known to those who had lived in walled cities, especially Jerusalem. The watchman would walk the walls of the city at night and watch for any potential attack or other incoming problems for the city. The watchman would sound a horn to let the city know of an attack or issue.

The watchman was held liable for his actions. If an attack came, but the watchman was asleep or for some other reason did not sound the alarm, then the blood of the city would be on his hands. But if he does sound the alarm but people do not respond, then the blood will be on their own hands.

*Ezekiel 33:7–9 (ESV)*

7 *“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 8 If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.*

God then reminds Ezekiel that God has made Ezekiel the watchman for Israel. God then told Ezekiel that he was to report to the people of Israel everything that God gave him to tell them. God also reminded Ezekiel that if God gives him a death warning but does not deliver it, then that individual's blood will be on Ezekiel's hands. The inverse is also true.

*Ezekiel 33:10–11 (ESV)*

10 *“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ 11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?*

God then directs Ezekiel to tell Israel that their sins and transgressions are now causing their issues. Ezekiel says that they are rotting away because of their own sins. They had failed to live up to God's directions, and as a result, they were in captivity and were not prospering.

God also says that He does not delight in the death of the wicked, but in reality, it was their own fault since the wicked turn from following God and His directions to them. God then implores Israel to turn back to Him.

*Ezekiel 33:12–16 (ESV)*

12 *“And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. 13 Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. 14 Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, 15 if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 16 None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.*

God also points out through Ezekiel that their won righteousness will not be enough to deliver the people from their sins. Ezekiel is here, echoing what he said in Ezekiel 18. People are responsible for their own actions, but those who seek forgiveness through repentance will be forgiven. God will forgive them because they have done the right things in repenting.

*Ezekiel 33:17–20 (ESV)*

*17 “Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. 18 When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. 19 And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by this. 20 Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways.”*

Ezekiel then discusses the belief of the people that God is not just in the way that He deals with the people of Israel. But the reality is that it is not God that is unjust but the people themselves that are unjust. God warns Israel through Ezekiel that when the people turn from God’s righteousness, they will surely die. But, when people turn from their unrighteousness and do what is right before God, they will be forgiven and shall live. Despite the promise from God, the people of Israel still believed that God was the unjust one.

### Ruin of the Land 33:21-33

*Ezekiel 33:21–22 (ESV)*

*21 In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said, “The city has been struck down.” 22 Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and he had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning, so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.*

The date presented by Ezekiel here equates to January 8, 585 BCE. On that day, an eyewitness arrived in Babylon with news of the fall of Jerusalem. We should note that the news arrived in Babylon 18 months after it occurred. There is no explanation of why it would have taken so long for word to arrive in Babylon. We are just left to wonder. One suggested solution, as presented by the New American Commentary, is:

*The time lag seems unrealistic since actual travel time from Jerusalem to Babylon would have been about four or five months. One suggestion is that the “twelfth” year should read “eleventh.” There is only one consonant difference in the Hebrew words for eleven and twelve, and it may have been a minor copyist’s error. The original reading may have been “eleventh” year, in which case the elapsed travel time would have been about six months, which was normal.*

*A second suggestion is that Ezekiel reckoned by the Babylonian calendar, which began the year in the spring, whereas Jeremiah (Jer 39:2; 52:6–7, 12) and Kings (2 Kgs 25:1) followed the Hebrew calendar, which began the year in the fall. Adjusting the difference would result in a time lapse of a more realistic five or six months. This second explanation is the more probable.*<sup>31</sup>

I would argue that the second paragraph makes more sense, but both seem logical.

*Ezekiel 33:23–29 (ESV)*

*23 The word of the LORD came to me: 24 “Son of man, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, ‘Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess.’ 25 Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: You eat flesh with the blood and lift up your eyes to your idols and shed blood; shall you then possess the land? 26 You rely on the sword, you commit abominations, and each of you defiles his neighbor’s wife; shall you then possess the land? 27 Say this to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in strongholds and in caves shall die by pestilence. 28 And I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and her proud might shall come to an end, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that none will pass through. 29 Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations that they have committed.*

Again Ezekiel begins a section with “the word of God came to me,” and again, Ezekiel is called the “Son of Man.” Ezekiel’s word, coming from God, was proven to be accurate and true. God warns Ezekiel that Ezekiel would be disappointed if he expected repentance following the destruction of Jerusalem. Israel was not going to repent. In fact, the people left in the rubble responded in pride. They said Abraham was but one man, and we are many. He got the land; as a result, how much more will we receive. We should recognize a big difference between Abraham’s response to God and the people’s response to Israel. Abraham believed and trusted God; the people of Israel cannot say they did. In many ways, this response from the people reflects the arrogance of the people in thinking that they can receive an inheritance from God despite their failure to repent.

God then reminds the people that they still sacrifice to idols in direct violation of God’s rules. They also ate meat with the blood still in it. They were violent and committed sexual immorality, all in violations of God’s laws. These survivors thought they had actually escaped God’s judgment because they had survived in the land, the judgment of God. But God told them they would also face the sword, wild beasts, and the plague. They had not escaped at all. The land

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<sup>31</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, [Ezekiel](#), vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 296–297.

would lay ruined for a long time and would not be worked by anyone. The end result of this judgment would be that everyone would know that the Lord is God.

*Ezekiel 33:30–33 (ESV)*

*30 “As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, ‘Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.’ 31 And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain. 32 And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. 33 When this comes—and come it will!—then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”*

It seems that the people Ezekiel was talking to in Babylon made Ezekiel a celebrity as he presented what God had given him. Their response was a little more encouraging than the reaction of the people who remained in Israel in ruins. The people listened to him but had no real intention of changing their lives. In many ways, they looked at what Ezekiel was telling them from God as entertainment, but they did not want to have it impact their lives.

God still had plans to keep Himself before the people, and He would continue to do that through the voices of Prophets like Ezekiel. God then reminded Ezekiel, as He did in chapter 2, that despite the people's response, Ezekiel still had a responsibility to relay the word of God to the people. Ezekiel had to demonstrate faithfulness to God, even when no one around him did.

### Role of Shepherd 34:1-31

We now move into chapter 34 of the book of Ezekiel, in which the subject is the Shepherds of Israel. Sheep are the most often mentioned animal in Scripture, with the Shepherds who care for them appearing in more than 100 Biblical Passages. Many of the Patriarchs and other prominent people in the Old Testament were shepherds. The theme of the shepherd is prominent in Scripture. Sheep are unable to care for themselves and, left alone, will wander off and die. They require care and protection from a shepherd who is willing to endanger himself to care for them.

Ezekiel moves back to a theme he had presented back in chapter 22, the sins of the leaders, the shepherds, of Israel. Ezekiel goes back to this theme because the National leadership of Israel had lead Israel not to follow God and, as a result, be removed from the land.

*Ezekiel 34:1 (ESV)*

*34 The word of the LORD came to me:*

Chapter 34 begins like many others, by Ezekiel stating that what follows is the Word of the Lord. Ezekiel was faithful in delivering to Israel what God told him, whether the news was positive or negative.

*Ezekiel 34:2–6 (ESV)*

*2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; 6 they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.*

God again refers to Ezekiel as the Son of Man. Ezekiel is directed to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. The word “prophesy” is the Hebrew word נָבֵאָה (hnb’ nābā’) means to bubble up or boil forth. I love the picture this word presents. Ezekiel’s job was to bubble up what God was giving to him. We most often think of prophecy as being predictive in nature, but prediction is only part of what prophecy is. Prophecy is presenting truth from Him, particularly what can only be given by Him.

God directs Ezekiel to speak out against the Shepherds of Israel. Shepherds here speaks of the civil and religious leaders of Israel. This would include the former kings, high priests, and other priests and all those who led the nation of Israel, Judah, and the tribal leaders. Throughout the Biblical narrative of the period of the Judges, the united monarchy, the divided monarch, and then after Israel was taken captive, the lone monarchy of Judah, we see leaders exploit and neglect the people. Often these leaders led the people away from following God and into following false Gods. There were no good kings of the ten northern tribes, and only some of the kings of Judah were good. Collectively the leaders of the people of Israel had failed to care for and lead in following God properly. They had failed as shepherds. Most of the kings and leaders had become wealthy, but often this wealth came at the expense of the people.

In verse 3, God accuses the shepherds of eating what they want and clothing themselves with the best but not caring for the people. The accusation seems to be that the leadership cared for themselves but not the people.

In verse 4, God says that the shepherds did not build up the weak and did not heal the sick or caring for the injured. This picture here is not that the kings or leaders were also the doctors, ambulance drivers, grocers, etc., but that they were responsible for ensuring they were cared for. But that was not what was important to the leadership.

Those were all functions of a good shepherd. The shepherd was responsible for feeding the sheep, caring for the sheep's injuries, providing water for them, finding them when they wandered off. That is the job of the shepherd that the Leadership in Israel failed to do.

Look specifically at verse 6:

*Ezekiel 34:6 (ESV)*

*6 they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.*

God had entered into an agreement, a treaty with Israel that required Israel to obey God or be removed from the land of Israel. With the failure of the shepherds of Israel to lead properly, Israel was removed from the land. The ten northern tribes, known as Israel, were taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 BCE. The southern tribes, known as Judah, were taken from the land in Babylonian captivity that Ezekiel was living through. The people of Israel and Judah were scattered all over the region.

I should also point out that the scattering that began in 722 BCE continues through the rest of the age of law and into the church age. It was not until May 1948 when Israel became a nation again. But the Jews are still scattered all over the world, as Ezekiel reports here in verse 6. It will not be until the end of the Tribulation period when Israel has been gathered together and prepared for Jesus to take the throne of Israel in Jerusalem that Israel will again be gathered together under the leadership of the Great Shepherd.

*Ezekiel 34:7–10 (ESV)*

*7 “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 10 Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.*

Because the Shepherds did not care for the people of Israel and did not lead them in following God, God says that He is against them. That is perhaps the worst possible thing that a person could ever hear that God was against them. God also says that the leadership of Israel will be held accountable for their failure to protect the people. Israel’s leadership had failed the people, so now God Himself would rescue Israel. The leadership would lose it all.

The next section describes how God will accomplish His care for Israel.

*Ezekiel 34:11–12 (ESV)*

*11 “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.*

No longer will God rely on the shepherds of Israel; he will search for His sheep. Of course, as an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God does not actually have to search for His people; He knows where they are. So what is God saying here that He will search and seek out His sheep? God is speaking in a language that the people would understand. The job of the shepherd was to seek out sheep that had wandered off. God is telling Israel He was going to take over the role of being the shepherd. Not only will He seek them out, but He will also rescue them.

Look closely at the description of when and where the people will be rescued from. The people will be rescued from all the places where they have been scattered. The time period is a period of dark clouds and thick darkness. We know from history that a complete rescue of Israel has not yet occurred. As we saw earlier, from 722 BCE on, Israel has been displaced. God permitted Israel to return to the land at the end of the Babylonian captivity but always under the authority of another nation. It will not be until the dark days of the tribulation are concluded that Israel will be a sovereign nation again under the power of God.

*Ezekiel 34:13–16 (ESV)*

*13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.*

God promises that He will bring the people back to the land of Israel, where He will feed them in good pastures and grazing land. They will be at peace and be able to relax without the fear of attack. God will gather those who have scattered back to Him in Israel. The picture is very much one of a shepherd at work providing good food, clean running water, and the security needed for sheep to rest. God is bringing all that to Israel in the Millennial kingdom.

*Ezekiel 34:17–19 (ESV)*

*17 “As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?”*

In the western church, it has been very common to believe that the people of Israel had a sort of corporate salvation from God. This passage here clearly reminds us that salvation is always individual. God says that He will judge between the individual sheep.

But what is really important to see here is how God will differentiate sheep from sheep. It is through the character of the sheep. The wicked sheep are the ones who followed the wicked shepherds, being focused on their own wealth and desires. Those who have muddied the water so that they could get a drink. Those who tread down the grass in the pasture so they can get their food. God will examine those things and remove those who are out for their own health and wealth.

*Ezekiel 34:20–24 (ESV)*

*20 “Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, 22 I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.*

God says He will judge between those who seek their own wealth and not the wealth of the people of Israel. God accuses those who seek their own prosperity over the prosperity of the people with being like an aggressive sheep who head butts and pushes the others out of the way. The bully sheep who forces others not to eat or drink because he takes theirs.

God says the He will set over them His servant David who will feed them as their shepherd. This is a fascinating prophecy from God to Ezekiel. David has been dead for close to 400 years when Ezekiel receives this prophecy from God. It is another 2500 years to our time, and who knows how long until the Millennial kingdom begins. Clearly, King David will have been resurrected by the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

In our ESV text, David is called a “prince” which is the Hebrew word נָשִׂי (nāśî) which is the root of the word Sheikh and has the idea of a chief, ruler, or even minor King. There has been an ongoing debate among scholars if this is a statement indicating the resurrected King David will rule Israel during the Millennial kingdom. The fact that נָשִׂי (nāśî) is used indicates to me that David will rule Israel as the under king while Jesus, the Messiah, will rule Israel and the world as The King. Just as the Apostles will rule the twelve tribes, King David will be ruler over Israel under the authority of Jesus. Some scholars have argued that since Jesus is a descendant of David, this is simply a reference to Jesus.

*Ezekiel 34:25–31 (ESV)*

*25 “I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. 26 And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. 27 And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the LORD,*

*when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. 28 They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. 29 And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. 30 And they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord GOD. 31 And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD.”*

God will provide care and protection for the people of Israel in the Millennial kingdom. God also says that He will make a covenant of peace with the people of Israel. He will also remove all the things that prey on the people to provide them with security. No longer will there be uncertainty for the people of Israel. When you think about the uncertainty that the people of Israel have dealt with, from the time they left Egypt until the Millennial kingdom, they have lived with real uncertainty. Through the judges and all the ups and downs of turning back to God and then away from God through the many cycles of the judges. Then through the period of the kings of both the united and the divided kingdoms. Then they lost control of their land. Now, as a secular nation completely encircled by enemies. It will not be until the Millennial kingdom that Israel will have peace. Peace only comes because God protects them and removes the danger from them. Ultimately peace only comes through the power of God.

## Hallowed Be Thy Name 35:1-36:38

Chapters 35 and 36 form a small unit in the book of Ezekiel. During this section, God again states that despite the rebellion of Israel, God will reveal His power to the entire world.

### Mountain of Seir 35:1-15

Edom had rejoiced over its victory over Israel. As a result of its victory over Israel, God will demonstrate His power in the judgment of Edom.

*Ezekiel 35:1-4 (ESV)*

*35 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, 3 and say to it, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you, and I will make you a desolation and a waste. 4 I will lay your cities waste, and you shall become a desolation, and you shall know that I am the LORD.*

God again speaks to Ezekiel and again calls him the “Son of Man.” God tells Ezekiel to “set his face against Mount Seir.” As we have already seen in previous passages, the phrase “set your face against” means to be against or in opposition to. So God is giving Ezekiel a command to be in opposition to Mount Seir. He is then told to prophesy against Mount Seir. Mount Seir was the

geographical name given to Edom. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, Isaac's brother. The word "Edom" means red and is reflective of Esau. Esau settled east of the Jordan River, north of the Dead Sea. Despite being related to Israel, Israel and Edom frequently fought. In fact, God called the relationship between Edom and Israel a "perpetual hatred." (Ezek 35:5, Amos 1:11-12)

God tells Ezekiel to prophesy against Edom and to tell them that this is coming from God. God said He would stretch out His hand against you and make you desolate and a waste. God also tells Ezekiel to tell Edom why He will do this, "So that they will know that I am the Lord." Edom had assisted Babylon in attacking Judah. The rest of chapter 35 presents the reason for this judgment.

*Ezekiel 35:5–9 (ESV)*

*5 Because you cherished perpetual enmity and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment, 6 therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you. 7 I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation, and I will cut off from it all who come and go. 8 And I will fill its mountains with the slain. On your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain with the sword shall fall. 9 I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD.*

Because Edom liked being the enemy of Israel and because they helped Babylon lay siege against Judah, judgment was coming their way. The phrase "cherished perpetual enmity" is only seen in two other places in Scripture. It is found in Ezekiel 25:15, where it is used in reference to the Philistines. The only other place it is used is in:

*Genesis 3:15 (ESV)*

*15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."*

The word "Enmity" is the Hebrew word *וְאֵי־בָטָן* (wě' êbâ). Its use in Gen 3:15 reflects a hostility and enemy status between the Serpent (Satan) and Eve and her descendants. I find it fascinating that God would choose to use the same language for the hostility between Judah and Edom as He does between Satan and Jesus.

The judgment God is announcing would be that Edom would be given over to bloodshed. Attack and killing would pursue the Edomites, and they would never be free from conflict. In reality,

God was telling Edom that the same thing they tried to inflict on Israel would befall them. The entire countryside, the towns on the mountainside would be laid desolate.

*Ezekiel 35:10–15 (ESV)*

*10 “Because you said, ‘These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them’—although the LORD was there—  
11 therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them. And I will make myself known among them, when I judge you. 12 And you shall know that I am the LORD.*

*“I have heard all the revilings that you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, ‘They are laid desolate; they are given us to devour.’ 13 And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it. 14 Thus says the Lord GOD: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. 15 As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.*

God had promised Canaan to Jacob’s descendants and not Esau’s. But Edom thought they could change God’s plan and take the Promised Land for herself. Even though Israel and Judah had sinned, God never removed His promise to Israel. The Promised Land was still their homeland. Even though Esau gave up his birthright, Edom still did not have the title deed to the land.

Edom’s attempt to gain possession of the land by helping Babylon would only result in the punishment of Edom.

Babylon had defeated Judah, and the world rejoiced over the power of Babylon. But while the world rejoices, Edom still cannot sweep in to take over the promised land. Edom would now face the same thing they tried to bring onto Judah, destruction.

The end result of this destruction is that the Edomites will know that God is in control and not Edom. God said that His actions are designed to show Edom and the world that He alone is sovereign.

## [Mountains of Israel 36:1-15](#)

*Ezekiel 36:1–7 (ESV)*

*36 “And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. 2 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy said of you, ‘Aha!’ and, ‘The ancient heights have become our possession,’ 3 therefore prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Precisely because they made you desolate and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became the*

*talk and evil gossip of the people, 4 therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, the ravines and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted cities, which have become a prey and derision to the rest of the nations all around, 5 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Surely I have spoken in my hot jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave my land to themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, that they might make its pasturelands a prey. 6 Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I have spoken in my jealous wrath, because you have suffered the reproach of the nations. 7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer reproach.*

Now Ezekiel is told to prophesy to the mountains of Israel. Judgment was coming to Edom and surrounding nations and also to Israel. Israel had already been taken captive by Babylon, but that did not mean that the blessings from God were over. God promised to judge the nations around Israel that participated in her destruction; Those nations that had made Israel a possession of other nations.

God then speaks of His “hot jealousy” against those who gave the promised land to themselves as possession with joy and contempt. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament<sup>32</sup> reflects that this word expresses a very strong emotion in which a quality or possession of the object is desired. This word is often used in the context of marriage, and since God is said to be the husband of Israel, it is the perfect word to be used here to speak of God's longing and desire for Israel. God longs for Israel to return to her proper relationship with Him. Despite Israel's sins, God will not forget the promises He has made to her. Because of His ongoing and continuing love for Israel, God will punish those nations that have gone against Israel.

*Ezekiel 36:8–12 (ESV)*

*8 “But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home. 9 For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. 10 And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt. 11 And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD. 12 I will let people walk on you, even my people Israel. And they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no longer bereave them of children.*

Despite the surrounding nations lay bear the nation of Israel and Judah, God would not leave it that way. God would return Jews to the land, and it would become fruitful again. God advised

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<sup>32</sup> Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999.

Israel that He is for them, and He will turn to them. He will multiply them and their cities rebuilt. Again, the end result is that Israel will know that he is God.

In the text here, God is viewed as talking to the mountains and the land of Israel. God says that He will allow people to walk on the land, even the people of Israel again. God does not mean that He will let people walk all over the people of Israel but the land of Israel. He will again make it populated. We need to see here that this prophecy has not been completely fulfilled. Sure, God permitted Israel to return to the land after the captivity, but not to be free and in their own control. There is a real sense that this will not be fulfilled until the millennial kingdom after the tribulation.

*Ezekiel 36:13–15 (ESV)*

*13 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they say to you, ‘You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,’ 14 therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord GOD. 15 And I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, declares the Lord GOD.”*

Some had complained that the land itself worked against Israel and even deprived Israel of some of her children. God promises that never again would the land devour children and make Israel childless. We have to go back to Ezekiel chapter 5 for this to make sense.

*Ezekiel 5:13–17 (ESV)*

*13 “Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am the LORD—that I have spoken in my jealousy—when I spend my fury upon them. 14 Moreover, I will make you a desolation and an object of reproach among the nations all around you and in the sight of all who pass by. 15 You shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations all around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with furious rebukes—I am the LORD; I have spoken— 16 when I send against you the deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and break your supply of bread. 17 I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will rob you of your children. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”*

This section also recalls what the spies recorded of the land before the wandering Hebrews took possession of it.

*Numbers 13:32 (ESV)*

*32 So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land*

*that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height.*

Israel had a long-standing fear of the Promised Land working against them. God addresses that here in Chapter 36.

*Ezekiel 36:13–15 (ESV)*

*13 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they say to you, ‘You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,’ 14 therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord GOD. 15 And I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, declares the Lord GOD.”*

The fulfillment of these prophecies is not recorded in Israel’s Old Testament prophecy. These prophecies will be fulfilled after God has prepared Israel for the coming of the Messiah and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. That is still the future for us.

### Motivation for Restoration 36:16-38

*Ezekiel 36:16–21 (ESV)*

*16 The word of the LORD came to me: 17 “Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity. 18 So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. 19 I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. 20 But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land.’ 21 But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.*

Verse 16 reflects a new prophecy from God to Ezekiel. When Israel lived in the land, they defiled the land by their sins and worshiping other gods. God then uses the illustration of a menstruating woman. During menstruation, a woman becomes ceremonially unclean, and everything she touched also becomes unclean. (Lev 15:19-23) As a result of their uncleanness, God punished the people. God removed them from the land and scattered them to the surrounding nations. God then reiterates that it was because of their sin that He punished them. The sin of Israel did not end when they were dispersed; they continued to profane His Holy Name.

Look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse 20. God says that Israel is His people, but they had to be disciplined. They had to be removed from the land. We often forget that God was obligated to punish Israel because He had told them He would if they violated His rules. They continuously violated the rules, so God was left with only the obligation. God's concern for His own holy name drove His punishment. I believe this means that God's character demanded that He do what He said He would do, that He punished the nation of Israel.

*Ezekiel 36:22–23 (ESV)*

*22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.*

This section begins with God reminding Israel that it was not for them that He was about to bring this action, but for His holy Name. God was acting to protect His name and character. God removed Israel from the land because His character demands it. God could not allow sin to go unpunished. Ultimately all sin will be dealt with. The sin of Israel was a personal and direct affront to God in that the people of Israel worshiped other gods. Add to this that God had entered into a contract with Israel that specifically told them they needed to be obedient or be removed from the land. They were not obedient, so God removed them from the land. He was obligated to do it.

*Ezekiel 36:24–26 (ESV)*

*24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

The punishment that God had given Israel was to scatter the people removed from the land. God promises to bring them back. I believe that when God first took the ten northern tribes into captivity in 722 BCE a sub-dispensation began that crosses from the age of law, through the church age, and the tribulation, ending only when the millennial kingdom begins. The sub-dispensation reflects the punishment of Israel. In this passage, God promises to bring the period to an end and ensure that New Covenant is in effect. The new Covenant from Jeremiah 31 promised Israel that they would be cleaned, given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and made to follow God. That has not happened collectively for Israel and will not happen until the millennial kingdom.

*Ezekiel 36:27–32 (ESV)*

*27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. 30 I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. 32 It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.*

In many ways, this promise from God duplicates the promise made by God in the original covenant made with Abraham and ratified by Moses and the Hebrews. God promises to bless Israel both spiritually and physically. Again God says that it is not for their sake but for His.

*Ezekiel 36:33–36 (ESV)*

*33 “Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. 34 And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. 35 And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ 36 Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.*

One day, God says, He will cleanse them and clean their cities. That one day has not yet come. It will, but not yet. God will provide such miraculous growth that people compare to the Garden of Eden when the earth was still in perfection. The whole purpose is so that people will know that He is God.

*Ezekiel 36:37–38 (ESV)*

*37 “Thus says the Lord GOD: This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them: to increase their people like a flock. 38 Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”*

God will also provide for them the livestock they will need to worship Him properly. Many people do not understand that worship will return to the temple during the millennial kingdom in the form of ritual sacrifice; Not for the remission of sins but in praise and worship of Jesus, the Messiah. So the world will know that He is God.

## One Nation Under God 37:1-39:29

We now move into a section of the book of Ezekiel in which Ezekiel brings hope to the exiled people of Israel for the future of the nation. Israel stood in complete disrepair, with the temple destroyed and the walls of Jerusalem in ruin. In order to bring hope to the people, Ezekiel is given the imagery of a skeleton in the desert.

### God's People Revived 37:1-14

*Ezekiel 37:1–3 (ESV)*

*37 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2 And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. 3 And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."*

Ezekiel is taken by the Spirit of the Lord out to the middle of a valley. This location is unknown, and many scholars believe there was no physical valley but simply a place in Ezekiel's vision. Just as we saw at the beginning of Ezekiel, God transports Ezekiel to a different place. This time he is taken to a desert valley. In the valley, God shows Ezekiel a valley full of bones. These bones littered the valley floor. As Ezekiel looked at the bones, he saw that they were very dry.

After showing Ezekiel the valley of dry bones scattered all about, God asked Ezekiel, "can these bones live?" We should remember that Ezekiel was Priest, and as a priest, he should never be in contact with dead bodies, which would defile him. Yet God had placed him right in the middle of a valley full of dry bones, skeletons. For the Hebrews, the standard of post-death care was to clean and anoint that dead body and wrap it on the day of death. So it was shameful for the body of a Hebrew to be left in the field to be left be consumed by vultures and other animals. God had warned Israel in His covenant with them that their sins would lead to a shameful experience.

*Deuteronomy 28:25–26 (ESV)*

*25 "The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26 And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away."*

Clearly, God was providing Ezekiel with the imagery of God dealing with the sinfulness of Israel. Israel was in the middle of her exile, which was punishment for her sinfulness. It must have been bleak for Israel without any thought that God would provide for Israel any restoration.

Standing where Ezekiel never thought he would be standing being asked a question, he never thought he would have to answer. Can these bones live? The obvious answer to the question would be no. One of the things I was trained as a medic to do was to determine if someone was alive or not. But in seeing a valley full of dry bones, it would not take much knowledge to know

these bones were not coming back to life. But God was asking more than the obvious question. God was asking Ezekiel if there could be a restoration of Israel.

Ezekiel could not answer the question or at least chose not to answer. Ezekiel turned the question back to God by saying, “O Lord God, you know.”

*Ezekiel 37:4–6 (ESV)*

*4 Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”*

God then directs Ezekiel to speak to these dry bones, to these disassembled skeletons, to listen to the Word of God. Ezekiel then tells the bones what God directs him to say. God says that He will cause breath to enter the bones, and the bones will live. He will cause sinews to form on the bones and flesh to cover the skeleton. Why? So that the bones will know that He is the Lord.

*Ezekiel 37:7–8 (ESV)*

*7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.*

As Ezekiel spoke to these dead, dry bones, he began to hear a rattling. Ezekiel then saw the bones come together. Connective tissue brought the bones together; skin covered the skeletons forming complete bodies. But, Ezekiel points out there was no breath in them. There was no life in these bodies.

*Ezekiel 37:9–10 (ESV)*

*9 Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.*

God then directs Ezekiel to command the “Breath” to breathe on these slain bodies that they may live. Scholars are uncertain how this word “breath” is to be understood. It is the Hebrew word חַיָּה (*hārûah*) which is often translated as breath, but also as wind or spirit. When God created Adam in “Breathed” into him, we know the “breath of life.” I think that is how we should view this passage. God commands Ezekiel to invoke God’s breath of life into these dead bodies made from the previously dry bones.

Ezekiel obeyed God’s direction and invoked the Spirit of God to enter these bodies, and they came alive. The now living bodies stood and assembled as a great army. The word translated in

our ESV as “army” is the Hebrew word חַיִל (hayil). חַיִל (hayil) is a word that means forces, mighty, strong, wealthy, valor, as well as an army. It is important that we see what this word means. Ezekiel sees this large group of bodies come alive and form a group of strong, wealthy, mighty warriors.

The Bible Student is challenged by this sight that Ezekiel describes. What is the purpose of this imagery? God explains that to Ezekiel in the next verse.

*Ezekiel 37:11–14 (ESV)*

*11 Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ 12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”*

God tells Ezekiel that these bones represent the “whole house of Israel.” When Babylon took Jerusalem captive, the ten northern tribes had already been in captivity for more than 150 years. Assyria took them in 722 BCE. Judah and Jerusalem were then taken into captivity beginning in 605 BCE with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. But God's promise here is to bring all of Israel back from captivity, the whole house of Israel.

God had promised Israel and Judah that they would be blessed for following the Lord, and they would eventually be removed from the land if they did not follow the Lord. They had not followed the Lord, and they had been removed from the land. Israel, the ten northern tribes, had never followed the Lord and were removed first. Then Judah, who had a few periods of following the Lord, was ultimately removed from the land. God promised to restore them all to the land.

One of the difficult things for the Bible Student to figure out is what God means when He says that He will open the graves raise them from the grave. Is God speaking of a resurrection of all Hebrews and returning them to Israel. We have no other place in scripture where all of Israel is resurrected and returned to the land. I think it better to view this as a spiritual statement in which Israel is brought back from the spiritual graves, and Israel is brought back to following God. There will be a restoration of Israel during the millennial kingdom. God will use the tribulation to bring Israel back to God, and then in the millennial kingdom, Israel will worship and follow God.

I should point out that I do not believe that the current nation of Israel is not a complete fulfillment of this prophecy. The modern nation of Israel is very secular and does not collectively follow God. God is not their king. But the day is coming that will all change.

## God's People United 37:15-28

*Ezekiel 37:15–19 (ESV)*

*15 The word of the LORD came to me: 16 “Son of man, take a stick and write on it, ‘For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.’ 17 And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. 18 And when your people say to you, ‘Will you not tell us what you mean by these?’ 19 say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand.*

Ezekiel again begins a new section with a statement that what follows actually comes from God. God again calls Ezekiel the “son of man.” God directs Ezekiel to take two sticks of wood. Write on one Judah, and the other, write the names of Joseph and Ephraim, along with the whole house of Israel. After King Solomon died, the northern tribes rebelled and followed a king from the tribe of Ephraim. The northern tribes were called Israel, and at times they were called Ephraim. The two southern tribes were called Judah, which was the largest of the two tribes. God here is saying that Israel and Judah will be reunited to form one nation again.

*Ezekiel 37:20–23 (ESV)*

*20 When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, 21 then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. 22 And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. 23 They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

God will gather Jews from all over the world and bring them back together as a united people who follow God. Israel and Judah have been scattered and remain scattered in our time. But God will bring them back together again. This is one of the primary purposes of the 7-year tribulation. Throughout the tribulation period, God will bring Israel together so that by the time of the end of the tribulation, Israel is ready for Jesus to be on the throne of David.

God also tells Ezekiel that they will no longer defile themselves with their idols when the two nations are made one. God will save them from their backsliding. Most Hebrew manuscripts have the Hebrew word מוֹשְׁבֹתֵהֶם (môšēbōtêhem), which means dwelling or house. Yet, most English translations translate the word as backsliding. It stems from the use of the word as a reference to the place where they have sinned. God will bring Israel back from where they have

lived in sin against God. God says that the people of Israel will again be His people, and He will again be their God.

*Ezekiel 37:24–28 (ESV)*

*24 “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. 25 They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. 27 My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”*

Not only will God bring Israel and Judah back together into one people, but He will also set King David over them. This is the second time in the book of Ezekiel that God reminds Israel that King David will be on the throne. We saw this in Ezekiel 34:23-24. The Bible Student has to attempt to figure out if God here is speaking of Jesus, a descendant of David as the Messiah, or whether the resurrected David will actually sit on the throne of Israel.

Ezekiel is not the only prophet to speak of David returning to Israel to rule again.

*Jeremiah 30:9 (ESV)*

*9 But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*

*Hosea 3:5 (ESV)*

*5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.*

As we saw in Chapter 34, David here is called prince, which is the Hebrew word נָשִׂיף (nāšîf) which means prince or minor king. A minor king is a king that is not completely sovereign but one who serves under the authority of another greater king. In this case, I think it is clear that David will be king over Israel while Jesus, the Messiah, will be sovereign King of both Israel and the world. God will make a new covenant of peace with Israel. This covenant will be eternal.

Not only will God give them an eternal covenant, He will also cause them to multiply. This means that under God’s protection and blessing, they will grow in number. God also says that He will set in the middle of them His “Sanctuary.” The word sanctuary is the Hebrew word אֶת־מִקְדָּשׁ (t-mqdšy) which means a sacred place or holy place. God will give Ezekiel the plans for that temple in chapters 40-43.

## God's People Protected 38:1-39:29

As we have seen in previous passages in Ezekiel, God brings the people of Israel back together again. We know that this occurs during the tribulation from the rest of Scripture, which is all about bringing Israel to the Messiah. The tribulation will also see Israel protected by God from the coalition of forces that seeks to destroy Israel. That is what this next section in the book of Ezekiel is all about: Israel's protection.

*Ezekiel 38:1–3 (ESV)*

*38 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him 3 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.*

In the conventional style found in the book of Ezekiel, we see that Ezekiel is conveying the “Word of the Lord.” The instructions were addressed to the “Son of Man,” the primary reference for Ezekiel by God in the book of Ezekiel.

God instructs Ezekiel to “set his face toward Gog.” We have seen that “set your face toward...” means to prophesy against or speak out against. God is here directing Ezekiel to speak out now against Gog. Who or what is Gog? That is a question that many scholars have attempted to answer, but few, if any, have. There have been characters in Scripture named Gog. For example, the Son of Shemaiah of the tribe of Reuben in 1 Chron 5:4. Not likely the intended identity. Here in Ezekiel, God is identified as the Chief Prince of Meshech and Tubal of the land of Magog. Josephus links Magog with the Scythians, nomadic tribes living in Siberia, north of Israel. Others have identified Magog with Ethiopia. Still, others have linked Magog to the land of King Gyges of Lydia. Lydia was in Modern eastern Turkey; King Gyges was the first of the Lydian dynasty known as Mermnand in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Still, others associate Magog with the land of Gagaia, a people group mentioned in the Amarna Letters. They suggest that Gagaia is an Akkadian variant form of Gog. I should point out that Arabic literature, including the Koran, treat Gog and Magog as mythical people and places. We can conclude from the many theories that we do not know who Gog is/was or what/where Magog is. What is clear is that Gog and Magog are used as symbols of anti-God people and places. Verse 3 clearly leads us to conclude that God is against Gog and Magog.

*Ezekiel 38:4–6 (ESV)*

*4 And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords. 5 Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 6 Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you.*

Not only is God against Gog and Magog, but He will also turn Gog about and put hooks into their jaws. This may refer to a fish hook, but more likely, a bridal used to direct horses. This means God will be changing the direction that Gog thought he would go in, leading his people against God. God will draw out the army and then take control of them, leading them to destruction.

Ezekiel also states that Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah, side with Gog in rebellion against God. Persia is also known as Babylon or modern Iran. Cush is ancient Ethiopia.



Put is also known as modern Lybia. Gomer and Beth-Togarmah are located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The map here represents what many scholars believe is the distribution of nations rising against Israel. Some modern scholars also associate the militant Islamic groups that encircle Israel as the extension of the groups mentioned in the text, which certainly fits our current geopolitical status.

These combined groups form an anti-God and anti-Israel military offensive. But when does this conflict take place? Some Ezekiel scholars believe that this conflict occurs during Ezekiel's lifetime with the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. This view is often part of a larger view in which immediate destruction is seen, yet future greater destruction is also in view. Jeremiah 50 and 51 are good examples of this type of prophecy. Other scholars believe that Ezekiel's prophecy is predictive of what will happen in the yet future. In context, Ezekiel describes the return of Israel to its land. This began in the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century and culminated in the declaration of sovereignty of Israel in May 1948. Aliyah, the return of Jews to Israel, continues as Jews worldwide decide to become Israelites. But in the future, God will expand and hasten this return, preparing Israel for Jesus to come as Messiah. The combined armies spoken of above seek to prevent this from continuing and attack Israel. In combination with Rev 14:14-20 and Daniel 11:40-41, it seems the best interpretation of when this battle begins is the midpoint in the tribulation. Others believe that this battle is actually the battle of Armageddon, which concludes the tribulation. Still, others believe that this battle will occur at the end of the "season" when Satan is released after the Millenium. I believe that a better case for the midpoint of the tribulation.

*Ezekiel 38:8-9 (ESV)*

*8 After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. 9 You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you.*

The gathered Jews will be attacked like an oncoming storm. As we look carefully at verse 8, we see that she lives with security after Israel is gathered together for a brief time. The invading multination army shatters that security.

*Ezekiel 38:10–13 (ESV)*

*10 “Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil scheme 11 and say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwallled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates,’ 12 to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the center of the earth. 13 Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all its leaders will say to you, ‘Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hosts to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil?’*

The army of God has the purpose of seizing and appropriating all the wealth of the land of Israel. Clearly, by this time, Israel will represent a system of prosperity and wealth that much of the rest of the world desires. Gog and associated armies are willing to go to battle to get it, despite this army previously promising to defend Israel. We know from other passages that Israel enters into a seven-year agreement for protection. This agreement is broken at year three and a half, and Israel is attacked.

*Ezekiel 38:14–16 (ESV)*

*14 “Therefore, son of man, prophesy, and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day when my people Israel are dwelling securely, will you not know it? 15 You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army. 16 You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.*

God then directs Ezekiel to prophesy again to Gog. Gog and its allied armies will invade Israel from the North, as most armies have attacked. Gog’s army is seeking to take the wealth of Israel, not realizing that God intends this attack to result in the destruction of the armies of Gog. God says that He will vindicate His holiness in their very sight.

Gog will come from the north, Persia will come from the East. Cush and Put will come from the south. From all around Israel, attacks will come. This coalition will be intent on destroying Israel and stealing all of Israel’s wealth. At the same time, God has intended to destroy Gog and its coalition armies. This is another classic example of man doing it for evil, but God does it for good.

*Ezekiel 38:17–18 (ESV)*

*17 “Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? 18 But on that day, the day that Gog shall come*

*against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger.*

God asks Gog if he was the one the prophet(s) had previously had spoken of? This question by God has caused some confusion on the part of scholars since there is no record in Scripture of prophecies against Gog. While a reference to Gog is not explicitly made, there are other predictions of this invasion.

*Joel 3:9–14 (ESV)*

9 *Proclaim this among the nations:*

*Consecrate for war;*

*stir up the mighty men.*

*Let all the men of war draw near;*

*let them come up.*

10 *Beat your plowshares into swords,*

*and your pruning hooks into spears;*

*let the weak say, "I am a warrior."*

11 *Hasten and come,*

*all you surrounding nations,*

*and gather yourselves there.*

*Bring down your warriors, O LORD.*

12 *Let the nations stir themselves up*

*and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;*

*for there I will sit to judge*

*all the surrounding nations.*

13 *Put in the sickle,*

*for the harvest is ripe.*

*Go in, tread,*

*for the winepress is full.*

*The vats overflow,*

*for their evil is great.*

14 *Multitudes, multitudes,  
in the valley of decision!*

*For the day of the LORD is near  
in the valley of decision.*

*Zephaniah 3:15–20 (ESV)*

15 *The LORD has taken away the judgments against you;  
he has cleared away your enemies.*

*The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;  
you shall never again fear evil.*

16 *On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
“Fear not, O Zion;  
let not your hands grow weak.*

17 *The LORD your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing.*

18 *I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival,  
so that you will no longer suffer reproach.*

19 *Behold, at that time I will deal  
with all your oppressors.*

*And I will save the lame  
and gather the outcast,  
and I will change their shame into praise  
and renown in all the earth.*

20 At that time I will bring you in,  
at the time when I gather you together;  
for I will make you renowned and praised  
among all the peoples of the earth,  
when I restore your fortunes  
before your eyes," says the LORD.

While Gog is not specifically mentioned, it does appear these two Prophets have recorded the same future event.

When these armies breach Israel, God's anger will be forcefully against them.

*Ezekiel 38:19–23 (ESV)*

*19 For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20 The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. 21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22 With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. 23 So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.*

God says in verse 19 that in His "jealousy," He brings His wrath on this invading army. Jealousy is often misunderstood as it relates to God. Jealousy is viewed as a negative emotion and process which is not healthy. Clearly, this understanding of jealousy does not fit God. Jealousy in this verse is the Hebrew word קִנְיָה (qin'â) which means fervor, or zeal. In a relationship with God, this word often includes the idea of possession by God. God separated the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as His chosen people. He is very possessive and protective of them. This is the idea of God being jealous of Israel. He will care for and protect them.

In His protection of Israel, God will send an earthquake which will result in people and animals quaking in His presence. Large-scale destruction will occur. In the uproar of the battle, the coalition armies of God will get confused and begin to turn on each other. How God confuses the armies is not known. But it is not hard to imagine how this could be done, particularly in our day with command and control systems relying on computers. A simple computer malfunction that paints targets on friendlies would result in exactly that same thing.

God clearly says in verse 22 that this war is His judgment. They will fight each other, and God will also bring rain, including large hailstones with fire and sulfur. God will supernaturally take out these armies besides their own inability to fight properly.

What is the result of this battle and the defeat of the armies of God? They will know that God is the Lord. God will put His enemies and the enemies of Israel in their place. He will defeat them, and as a result, they will know that He alone is God.

*Ezekiel 39:1–6 (ESV)*

*“And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. 2 And I will turn you about and drive you forward, and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. 3 Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. 4 You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. 5 You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. 6 I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD.*

God against direct Ezekiel to speak out against Gog. God tells Ezekiel to tell Gog that He is against them. Not just against them, but He will bring them from around the earth and utterly defeat them. They will attack Israel but will be defeated and become food for the birds of prey and the beasts of the field. Fire will consume those who do not get devoured by the animals. All so the enemies of God will know that He is the Lord.

*Ezekiel 39:7–8 (ESV)*

*7 “And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. 8 Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares the Lord GOD. That is the day of which I have spoken.*

Not only will the enemies know that God is the sovereign, but Israel will also recognize He is God and will no longer profane His name. That is the focus of the entire tribulation, to bring Israel back to God and dependence on Him alone. God brings Israel back to their own land and shows them He is God, and they corporately turn back to Him. God takes the tribulation events and uses them to bring the people of Israel to the point that they recognize their sin and their need for God. In recognizing their sin, Israel turns to God, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, and is prepared for Him to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

*Ezekiel 39:9–10 (ESV)*

*9 “Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and*

*spears; and they will make fires of them for seven years, 10 so that they will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forests, for they will make their fires of the weapons. They will seize the spoil of those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them, declares the Lord GOD.*

So many weapons will be left by the defeated enemies of Israel that Israel will be able to keep their fires burning for the entire tribulation without going to the wood for fuel. Of course, in a world with the technology we have today, perhaps instead of wood, oil, or other energy sources supplies Israel for the tribulation. In either case, this war results in Israel being united in following God and being supplied with fuel and supplies from the fallen enemy.

*Ezekiel 39:11–16 (ESV)*

*11 “On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers, east of the sea. It will block the travelers, for there Gog and all his multitude will be buried. It will be called the Valley of Hamon-gog. 12 For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. 13 All the people of the land will bury them, and it will bring them renown on the day that I show my glory, declares the Lord GOD. 14 They will set apart men to travel through the land regularly and bury those travelers remaining on the face of the land, so as to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make their search. 15 And when these travel through the land and anyone sees a human bone, then he shall set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog. 16 (Hamonah is also the name of the city.) Thus shall they cleanse the land.*

Often missed in the context here is that Israel has respect for her enemies in that Israel buries the dead of their enemy. God began the process of removing the dead through the bird and animals. But look at verse 11. God gives the dead enemy a burial in Israel, the valley of the Travelers, east of the Sea. The process of burying all the dead will halt traffic from moving in the region. Most scholars believe that this location will be east of the Dead Sea in today's Jordan, perhaps in the ancient area of Moab. This was an area that travelers would go through to get to Israel from the east and the north. It will take seven months for Israel to bury the dead. Teams will be dispatched to go out and pick up the dead for burial. Citizens will be given instructions to place markers where they find human bones so the bone collectors can pick them up. This will be a long and large process for Israel.

*Ezekiel 39:17–20 (ESV)*

*17 “As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: ‘Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. 18 You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of he-goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan. 19 And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the*

*sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. 20 And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,' declares the Lord GOD.*

As we saw earlier, the period right after the battle, the birds of prey and animals will eat well. Notice the words used here for the animals eating. The animals are eating a sacrificed feast. Israel was accustomed to killing and eating animals used in sacrifices. The table was now turned on Israel's enemies as the enemy was sacrificed and was now eaten by the animals. God says the animals will be eating so well. It will be like the sacrifice of bulls from Bashan. Bashan was a very fertile grazing land northeast of Galilee in which the animals grew very fat. The animals will get their fill.

*Ezekiel 39:21–24 (ESV)*

*21 "And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. 22 The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. 23 And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. 24 I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.*

In this passage, we see two outcomes of the battle and the death of the armies of Gog. First, we see that the nations will see God's glory. The protection of Israel and the defeat of those who attacked Israel will result in the world's remaining nations recognizing the Glory of God. "Glory," here is the Hebrew word *כְּבוֹד* (kbwd) which means majesty, honor, splendor, impressiveness, or manifestation of power. When we dig into the meaning of *כְּבוֹד* (kbwd), we see the root includes the idea of heaviness. The world would see the weight of God, the majesty of God, the splendor of God.

Second, we see that Israel turns back to God because God protects them. God defeating the enemy will force Israel to recognize that God is sovereign and indeed in control.

*Ezekiel 39:25–29 (ESV)*

*25 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. 26 They shall forget their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, 27 when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. 28 Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore.*

*29 And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.”*

The defeat of Gog will be followed by God, restoring wealth to Israel. This wealth will come from other nations around the world. The dispersed Jews from all over the world will come to Israel. Israel will gather in the land, following God. God will restore Israel as a people, a very wealthy people. He will also protect them and deliver them from those who seek to harm them.

## And the Word Became Flesh Ezekiel 40:1-46:24

We enter the next to the last section of the Book of Ezekiel. In chapters 40 through 46, Ezekiel is given a glimpse into the future through a tour of a new Temple that future generations will worship God.

### Temple Construction 40:1-42:20

*Ezekiel 40:1–2 (ESV)*

*40 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me to the city.*

*2 In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south.*

Ezekiel gives a specific date for this prophecy. I should point out that this date is the thirteenth and final date in the book. This date corresponds to April 28<sup>th</sup>, 573 BCE, in our calendar system. Some scholars have determined that due to Israel changing the New Year from Nisan, which corresponds to April-May, to Tishri, which corresponds to October-November, this date would actually be October 22, 573 BCE.

Ezekiel has already presented the future return of the Jews to Israel and the cleansing of the nation. In this prophecy, Ezekiel also reminded Israel that God would restore Israel's productivity and security. This was important for occupied and exiled people to know and understand. As good a prophecy as it was for Israel to hear, it was not complete. The people also needed to hear of the restoration of their temple and corporate worship of God.

Look at verses 1 and 2. Ezekiel states that God brought him into the city in the land of Israel. Ezekiel says that the hand of the Lord was upon him, and He brought him to the city. Ezekiel then says that “in visions,” God brought him into Israel. We should first remember that Ezekiel is in Babylon, having been deported early on in exile. Ezekiel states that God's hand was upon Him. I interpret that to mean that God used His power to affect this vision. But I do not interpret vision to mean that Ezekiel saw a dream or vision. The word vision is the Hebrew word **בְּמַרְאֵי** (bmr'wt) which the Dictionary of Biblical Languages defines as:” a supernatural revelation from

God given as a communication in visual images and verbal content.<sup>33</sup> The Theological Word Book of the Old Testament adds the sense that this word also reflects the idea of seeing, not just perceiving. I conclude then that God transported Ezekiel much like He did the Apostle John for the book of Revelation. Ezekiel was transported in time and space to be able to witness the scene that is yet future.

God transports Ezekiel to a high mountain from which he could look south and see the city and the events described. The location of the mountain is not given in the text, but most scholars believe that the mountain is actually Mount Zion on the north side of Jerusalem. This mountain was also known as Mount Moriah.

It is natural to correlate Ezekiel's experience on the mountain to Moses' mountain top experience of receiving the Laws from God. On Moses' mountain, he received the law given to the people of Israel. On Ezekiel's mountain, he received legislation for the new age of the Millennial Kingdom. This places Moses and Ezekiel in a small and unique group of legislative prophets.

*Ezekiel 40:3–4 (ESV)*

*3 When he brought me there, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand. And he was standing in the gateway. 4 And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you. Declare all that you see to the house of Israel."*

Ezekiel sees a man who had an appearance like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring tool in his hand. The man Ezekiel saw was most likely an angel. Ezekiel's description of the man as a bronze appearance. It is a little challenging to make sense of this description in a historical context. The word Bronze here is the Hebrew word נְחֹשֶׁת (nəḥōšet) which is also translated as brass. It has as its base meaning copper, the semiprecious mineral taken out of the ground and from which brass and bronze alloys are made. There is also a sense that the word indicates a radiance. From this, I believe that Ezekiel is describing a man with a radiance that was apparent but not the sun's radiance as seen elsewhere in Scripture.

Ezekiel observed that the man had a measuring reed, tape measure, or yardstick in our vernacular today. Ezekiel sees the man standing in a gate of the city, or perhaps to the temple complex. The man tells Ezekiel to look, to really look, and pay attention to the details of what he is about to see. He was being shown this temple so that he could describe it to Israel to give them hope for the future.

The temple was a very significant symbol for Israel. In the Old Testament, we have presented 13 altars for the worship of God, located in Shiloh, Dan, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Hebron, Bethlehem, Nob, Micah's house, Ophrah, Gibeah, Arad, and Jerusalem. Beginning with Solomon's Temple, we have seven permanent structures referred to as temples. They are

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<sup>33</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

Solomon's temple, Zerubbabel's temple, which was built by the returning exiles, Herod's temple, which was a refurbish of Zerubbabel's temple. Then there is a reference to the "present temple," which refers to the church. The next temple is the temple in Revelation, chapter 11, which is present in the tribulation and defiled at the midpoint of the tribulation. The next temple is the temple Ezekiel describes as a millennial temple. The last of the temples to God is the Eternal Temple, which John describes in Revelation 21.

*Ezekiel 40:5 (ESV)*

*5 And behold, there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area, and the length of the measuring reed in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length. So he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed.*

The measuring system given here is a little problematic for us. The cubit was a common measurement, but it was not precise. A cubit was the distance from the tip of the elbow to the tip of the outstretched middle finger. That is a variable between every person. For most adult men, the length is approximately 18 inches. But it gets even more complex. Ezekiel's cubit was known as the "royal cubit." The royal cubit adds to the standard cubit a "handbreadth." A handbreadth is the width of a man's hand at the base of the fingers—approximately 3 inches. So, approximately 18 inches plus approximately 3 inches.

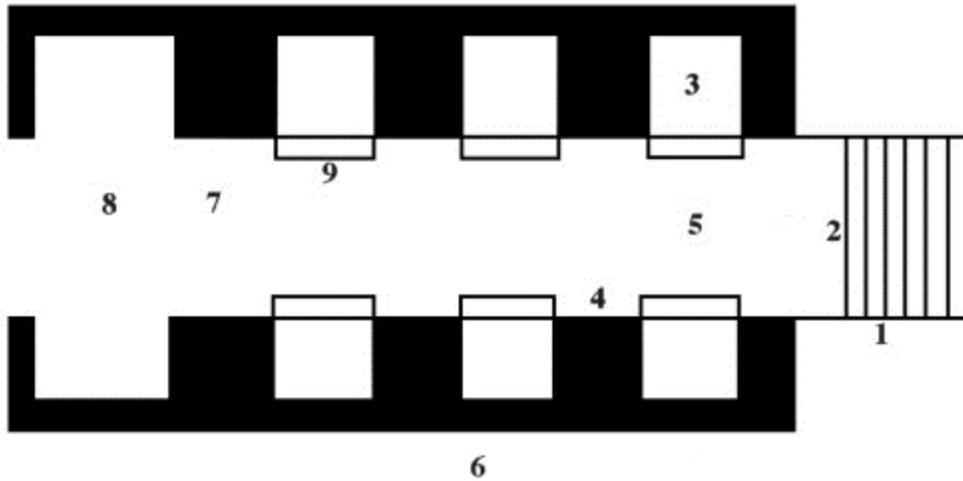
Ezekiel describes the measuring stick held by the angel as being six long or royal cubits in length. Ten royal cubits equal approximately 10.5 feet. That makes the thickness of the wall about 10.5 feet and the height about 10.5 feet.

In the next few sections of the text, Ezekiel observes and describes the wall and eastern gates in the wall. Verses 6-9 describe the east gate, the north gate in 20-23, the south gate in 24-27. Each of these gates had the same design and size.

*Ezekiel 40:6–14 (ESV)*

*6 Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep. 7 And the side rooms, one reed long and one reed broad; and the space between the side rooms, five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the vestibule of the gate at the inner end, one reed. 8 Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, on the inside, one reed. 9 Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and its jambs, two cubits; and the vestibule of the gate was at the inner end. 10 And there were three side rooms on either side of the east gate. The three were of the same size, and the jambs on either side were of the same size. 11 Then he measured the width of the opening of the gateway, ten cubits; and the length of the gateway, thirteen cubits. 12 There was a barrier before the side rooms, one cubit on either side. And the side rooms were six cubits on either side. 13 Then he measured the gate from the ceiling of the one side room to the ceiling of the other, a breadth of twenty-five cubits; the openings faced each other.*

The man/angel took Ezekiel around to the east side of the wall. The gates were 10.5 deep and 10.5 feet wide. There were side rooms in the gateway that was 10.5 square, with five cubits between them. The diagram below illustrates these gate's designs.



- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Seven steps (vv. 6, 22, 26)                | 6. Chamber windows (v. 16)    |
| 2. Porch (outer, v. 8)                        | 7. Threshold (inner, v. 7)    |
| 3. Guard chambers (vv. 7, 10, 12)             | 8. Porch (inner, vv. 6, 11)   |
| 4. Chamber walls (v. 7)                       | 9. Chamber door walls (v. 12) |
| 5. Threshold (outer, vv. 6, 11) <sup>34</sup> |                               |

*Ezekiel 40:15–19 (ESV)*

*15 From the front of the gate at the entrance to the front of the inner vestibule of the gate was fifty cubits. 16 And the gateway had windows all around, narrowing inwards toward the side rooms and toward their jambs, and likewise the vestibule had windows all around inside, and on the jambs were palm trees.*

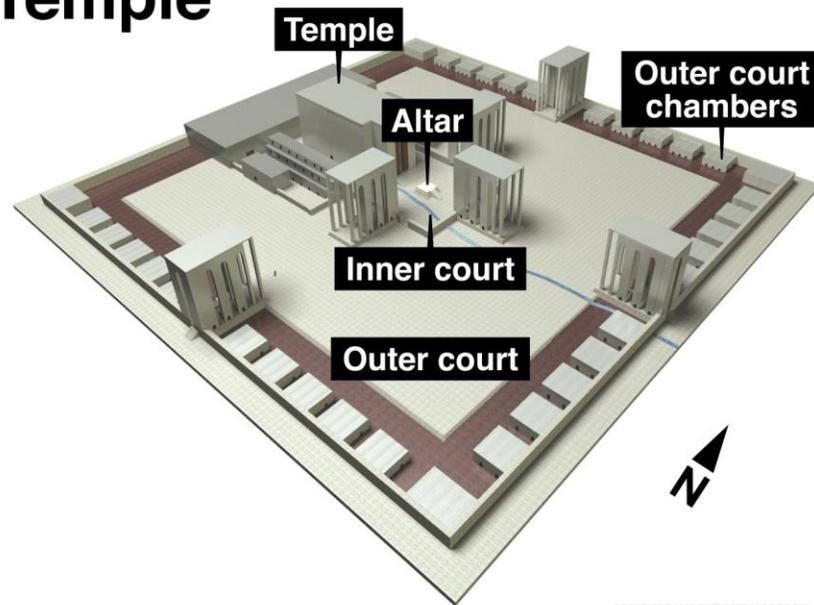
*17 Then he brought me into the outer court. And behold, there were chambers and a pavement, all around the court. Thirty chambers faced the pavement. 18 And the pavement ran along the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates. This was the lower pavement. 19 Then he measured the distance from the inner front of the lower gate to the outer front of the inner court, a hundred cubits on the east side and on the north side.*

The Angel/man brought Ezekiel through the gateway into the outer courtyard. Ezekiel saw a paved area with 30 rooms around the outside of the courtyard. Ten rooms along the East wall, the south wall, and the north wall. The purpose of these rooms is not given, but they are likely designed for storage or meeting/training rooms.

<sup>34</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 359.

This rendering of the Temple reflects these things.

## Ezekiel's Temple



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*Ezekiel 40:20–27 (ESV)*

*20 As for the gate that faced toward the north, belonging to the outer court, he measured its length and its breadth. 21 Its side rooms, three on either side, and its jambs and its vestibule were of the same size as those of the first gate. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. 22 And its windows, its vestibule, and its palm trees were of the same size as those of the gate that faced toward the east. And by seven steps people would go up to it, and find its vestibule before them. 23 And opposite the gate on the north, as on the east, was a gate to the inner court. And he measured from gate to gate, a hundred cubits.*

*24 And he led me toward the south, and behold, there was a gate on the south. And he measured its jambs and its vestibule; they had the same size as the others. 25 Both it and its vestibule had windows all around, like the windows of the others. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. 26 And there were seven steps leading up to it, and its vestibule was before them, and it had palm trees on its jambs, one on either side. 27 And there was a gate on the south of the inner court. And he measured from gate to gate toward the south, a hundred cubits.*

The two sections provide an additional description of the three identical gateways.

*Ezekiel 40:28–31 (ESV)*

*28 Then he brought me to the inner court through the south gate, and he measured the south gate. It was of the same size as the others. 29 Its side rooms,*

*its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and both it and its vestibule had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. 30 And there were vestibules all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits broad. 31 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its jambs, and its stairway had eight steps.*

The angel/man then directed Ezekiel into the inner court of the temple through the south gate. The angel measured the south gate, and Ezekiel saw that it was the same size as the other gates. These gates from the outer courtyard to the inner courtyard were the same as those leading into the outer courtyard outside the temple complex. The only difference is that the gates from the outer to inner courtyards were that the porches on the inner gates faced the outer courtyard.

*Ezekiel 40:32–34 (ESV)*

*32 Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gate. It was of the same size as the others. 33 Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and both it and its vestibule had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. 34 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its jambs, on either side, and its stairway had eight steps.*

*Ezekiel 40:35–37 (ESV)*

*35 Then he brought me to the north gate, and he measured it. It had the same size as the others. 36 Its side rooms, its jambs, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others, and it had windows all around. Its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. 37 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its jambs, on either side, and its stairway had eight steps.*

*Ezekiel 40:38–43 (ESV)*

*38 There was a chamber with its door in the vestibule of the gate, where the burnt offering was to be washed. 39 And in the vestibule of the gate were two tables on either side, on which the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering were to be slaughtered. 40 And off to the side, on the outside as one goes up to the entrance of the north gate, were two tables; and off to the other side of the vestibule of the gate were two tables. 41 Four tables were on either side of the gate, eight tables, on which to slaughter. 42 And there were four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high, on which the instruments were to be laid with which the burnt offerings and the sacrifices were slaughtered. 43 And hooks, a handbreadth long, were fastened all around within. And on the tables the flesh of the offering was to be laid.*

In the vestibule to the gate was a room dedicated to the washing of the sacrifices. The exact location of these rooms does not appear to have been given. On the sides of the inner gates,

tables were positioned to prepare the sacrifices. There were four tables on each side of the gate. Sacrifices would be taken to the inner court to be offered on the altar. These tables are described as being made of hewn stone. Ezekiel describes hooks to hold up the animal as it was being processed for sacrifice in the walls where the tables were located.

Through clay tablets found in Ebla Syria, slaughter tables, as Ezekiel describes, were described in great detail. The stone would have channels cut in them to allow the draining of blood away from the surface area and then be collected in a bucket.

*Ezekiel 40:44–47 (ESV)*

*44 On the outside of the inner gateway there were two chambers in the inner court, one at the side of the north gate facing south, the other at the side of the south gate facing north. 45 And he said to me, “This chamber that faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple, 46 and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who alone among the sons of Levi may come near to the LORD to minister to him.” 47 And he measured the court, a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits broad, a square. And the altar was in front of the temple.*

The angel/man then shows Ezekiel the priest’s quarters. There were two rooms, one on the side of the north gate facing south and one on the south gate facing north. One was for the priests who took care of the temple, and the other for the priests that cared for the altar. The size of the inner court was also measured to 100 cubits by 100 cubits.

We are also given another important factoid. Ezekiel says that it was restricted to the sons of Zadok, of the Levites who could serve at the altar in this temple. Zadok was a priest who remained loyal to David and anointed Solomon as King at David’s death. Zadok was appointed high priest by Solomon. Zadok descended from Aaron through Eleazar instead of Abiathar as the previous high priestly line had.

*Ezekiel 40:48–49 (ESV)*

*48 Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the jambs of the vestibule, five cubits on either side. And the breadth of the gate was fourteen cubits, and the sidewalls of the gate were three cubits on either side. 49 The length of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the breadth twelve cubits, and people would go up to it by ten steps. And there were pillars beside the jambs, one on either side.*

The angel/man then brought Ezekiel into the temple sanctuary. The sanctuary was accessed through a set of steps. The door jambs were five cubits in width, and the opening was fourteen cubits. Once through the door, the porch of the sanctuary was 12 by 20 cubits in size. There were large pillars on either side of the door.

## Temple Presence 43:1-12

Ezekiel's guide has completed the measurement of the temple complex. Ezekiel's tour of the temple was now complete. Ezekiel's guide, the angel/man, brought Ezekiel to the East side of the temple.

*Ezekiel 43:1–2 (ESV)*

*43 Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. 2 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory.*

Standing at the east side of the temple, Ezekiel, facing the Mount of Olives, sees the “Glory of God” coming from the east toward the temple complex. He describes it as having a sound like a large waterfall and having brilliance to light up the area.

*Ezekiel 43:3–5 (ESV)*

*3 And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. 4 As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, 5 the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.*

Ezekiel describes what he saw as what he saw in previous visions or experiences earlier in the book, particularly when the city was destroyed and the first vision when he was by the Chebar canal in chapter 1.

Ezekiel did what we all should do when confronted with God and fell on his face in the worship of God. As God's glory went past him into the temple, the Holy Spirit picked up Ezekiel and brought him into the inner temple court. Ezekiel could see that God's glory filled the temple.

*Ezekiel 43:6–9 (ESV)*

*6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, 7 and he said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places, 8 by setting their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them. They have defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger. 9 Now let them put away their whoring and the dead bodies of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.*

Ezekiel and his angel/man guide standing beside him heard a voice coming from within the temple, speaking to him. God told Ezekiel that this was the place that He would reside with His

people forever. No longer will Israel's leadership or people defile the temple by following other gods. This would be the place that Israel interacts with God for eternity. The question we need to answer is this the millennium or the new heaven and new earth?

*Ezekiel 43:10–12 (ESV)*

*10 “As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and they shall measure the plan. 11 And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out. 12 This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple.*

God then instructs Ezekiel to describe the temple for a specific purpose. God wants Ezekiel to describe the temple so that Israel recognizes her sin and be ashamed of it. The knowledge of all that God would do for Israel in the future was designed to cause Israel to be ashamed of her sin and her disobedience to God. Despite all their failure, God still would bring Israel corporate blessings.

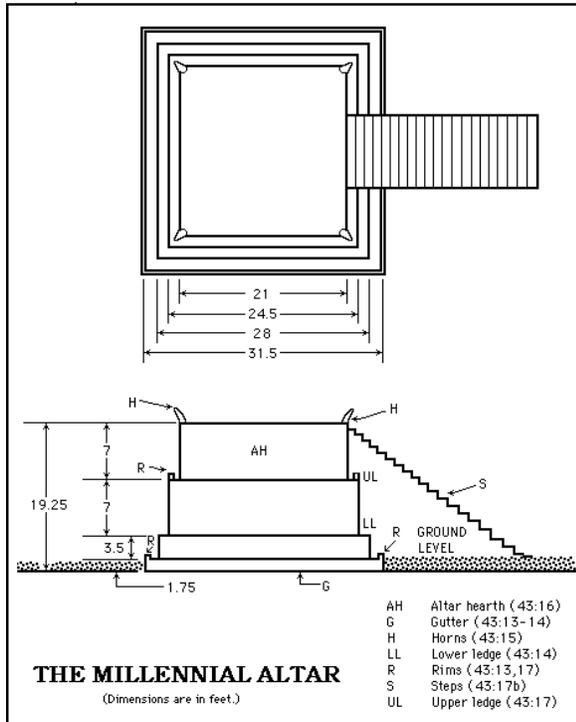
Some argue that this prophecy was fulfilled in the return from exile in Babylon. But Israel did not repent of her sins and will not until the tribulation. Israel will enjoy a much better relationship with God during the millennial kingdom, and God's glory will be in the temple.

### Temple Worship 43:13-27

*Ezekiel 43:13–17 (ESV)*

*13 “These are the measurements of the altar by cubits (the cubit being a cubit and a handbreadth): its base shall be one cubit high and one cubit broad, with a rim of one span around its edge. And this shall be the height of the altar: 14 from the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits, with a breadth of one cubit; and from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits, with a breadth of one cubit; 15 and the altar hearth, four cubits; and from the altar hearth projecting upward, four horns. 16 The altar hearth shall be square, twelve cubits long by twelve broad. 17 The ledge also shall be square, fourteen cubits long by fourteen broad, with a rim around it half a cubit broad, and its base one cubit all around. The steps of the altar shall face east.”*

This section begins with the measurement of the altar on which the sacrifices will be made. As we saw earlier, the cubit is the “Royal cubit,” being a regular cubit plus a handbreadth, approximately 21 inches.



The height of the altar was 19.25 feet, but part was below ground. The above-ground part was 17.5 feet, the same as the altar in Solomon's temple. (2 Chron 4:1, note: Solomon used the traditional shorter cubit ) The altar was 21 feet square and was reached by a flight of stairs facing east.

*Ezekiel 43:18–19 (ESV)*

*18 And he said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: These are the ordinances for the altar: On the day when it is erected for offering burnt offerings upon it and for throwing blood against it, 19 you shall give to the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who draw near to me to minister to me, declares the Lord GOD, a bull from the herd for a sin offering.*

God then gives to Ezekiel the law concerning sacrifices on the altar. AS God had done with the altar by Moses and Solomon, the altar had to be dedicated and sanctified to the service of God. So God gave the instructions for the process. God prescribed that the priests from the family of Zadok complete the sanctification.

*Ezekiel 43:20–22 (ESV)*

*20 And you shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of the ledge and upon the rim all around. Thus you shall purify the altar and make atonement for it. 21 You shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and it shall be burned in the appointed place belonging to the temple, outside the sacred area. 22 And on the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering; and the altar shall be purified, as it was purified with the bull.*

A bull from the herd was to be the sin offering. Blood from the bull should be put on the horns of the altar, the four corners of the ledge, and all around the rim of the altar. These actions were in keeping with the Levitical commands. Then the bull was to be burned in a sacred place outside of the temple complex. This place was to be prepared beforehand for this function. Then on the second day, a perfect male goat was to be offered. The altar was then purified or decontaminated from sin, as it was with the bull.

*Ezekiel 43:23–26 (ESV)*

*23 When you have finished purifying it, you shall offer a bull from the herd without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish. 24 You shall present*

*them before the LORD, and the priests shall sprinkle salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD. 25 For seven days you shall provide daily a male goat for a sin offering; also, a bull from the herd and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be provided. 26 Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it.*

Then after the seven days of purification, the priests were to take a bull, without blemish, and a ram, without blemish, and present them to the Lord. The priests should sprinkle salt on them and then offer them as a burnt offering. The salt was part of the traditional communal meals that came from the sacrifices. It represented purification and preservation. These seven days were all about atonement, cleansing, and dedication of the altar.

*Ezekiel 43:27 (ESV)*

*27 And when they have completed these days, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer on the altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, and I will accept you, declares the Lord GOD.”*

Once the altar has been sanctified, God would then accept the sacrifices of the people. From the 8<sup>th</sup> day forward, the priests would then offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. Sacrifices would again be a regular part of the worship system.

The following is an extended quote from the New American Commentary on Ezekiel:

*At least seven theological concepts are associated with the altar and the sacrifices. First, the altar sometimes was regarded as the “table” of Yahweh (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:7, 12). It was where the sacrifice was transformed by fire into smoke that rose to heaven and to God. Because it was burned, it became an irrevocable gift.*

*Second, since the temple was regarded as the “house” of God, a house normally had a hearth, which was a repository of fire. The altar was considered to be the “hearth” of God (Ezek 43:15–16). The fire of God was on the altar, and priests were admonished to keep the fire pure (see Lev 10:1–7). Fire is a symbol in Scripture for God’s presence (Exod 19:18), power (Exod 9:24), wrath (2 Kgs 1:9–12), approval (Lev 9:24), guidance (Exod 13:21–22), protection (Zech 2:5), purity (Isa 6:5–7), deliverance (2 Kgs 2:11), God’s word (Jer 5:14), the Messiah (Mal 3:2), the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3), judgment (Matt 25:41), the return of Christ (2 Thess 1:8), and the end of the present age (2 Pet 3:10–12).*

*Third, the altar was a sign of God’s presence among his people (43:27). It was commemorative of a theophany (Gen 12:7; 26:24–25). Such manifestations of God were often accompanied by fire (Exod 19:18; Judg 13:16–22).*

*Fourth, the altar was associated with the idea of holiness, purity, and mercy, especially the horns of the altar (43:15, 20; 1 Kgs 1:50–51; 2:28). The*

*sprinkling of blood on the horns of the altar was a rite of purification (43:18–21).*

*Fifth, the altar was an instrument of mediation (40:47; 43:19). Offerings were translated from the physical world by burning and given to God as they rose to heaven in smoke. By keeping the commandments, the offerings, sacrifices, and feast days, the covenant promises were maintained (Lev 1:1–7:38).*

*Sixth, sacrifices were considered a gift to God (Ps 50:1–2; Ezek 43:27). A domesticated animal that was needed for food and work was given to God. The sacrifice was burned for two reasons: (1) burning made the gift irrevocable, and (2) it translated it to the invisible world where God lived. Thus the sacrifice was a means of communication with God and was considered a form of prayer (Ps 141:2).*

*Seventh, sacrifice was for expiation of sins committed unknowingly and unintentionally (43:25–27; Lev 4:2, 13, 22, 27; 5:3–4, 15, 18; Num 15:22–31).<sup>35</sup>*

## Temple Leadership 44:1-45:12

In chapter 43, we saw the instructions of worship in the temple and a description of the temple itself. In chapter 44, we see instructions concerning temple leadership for the temple in the millennium.

*Ezekiel 44:1–3 (ESV)*

*44 Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east. And it was shut. 2 And the LORD said to me, “This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it. Therefore it shall remain shut. 3 Only the prince may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD. He shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.”*

Ezekiel is guided back to the outer gate of the temple on the east side of the inner court. Ezekiel saw that the east-facing gate was closed. God told Ezekiel that the gate was closed and would not be opened by anyone until the “prince” entered through it. The Prince has previously been identified for us as King David.

*Ezekiel 34:24 (ESV)*

*24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.*

*Ezekiel 37:24–25 (ESV)*

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<sup>35</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, [Ezekiel](#), vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 385–386.

24 *“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.*  
25 *They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.*

Ezekiel is told that the “prince” will also be able to eat at the gate. This is interpreted as King David being privileged to eat from the offerings brought to the Altar.

*Ezekiel 44:4–8 (ESV)*

*4 Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple, and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD. And I fell on my face. 5 And the LORD said to me, “Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears all that I shall tell you concerning all the statutes of the temple of the LORD and all its laws. And mark well the entrance to the temple and all the exits from the sanctuary. 6 And say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: O house of Israel, enough of all your abominations, 7 in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple, when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood. You have broken my covenant, in addition to all your abominations. 8 And you have not kept charge of my holy things, but you have set others to keep my charge for you in my sanctuary.*

Ezekiel was then brought to the north side of the inner court of the temple. On the Northside, they could enter the north gate and go into the inner court. The east gate was closed, so they had to go around the corner to enter the inner court. There he could see that the glory of the Lord had filled the temple. He immediately fell in the worship of the Lord. God called Ezekiel the “son of man” and told him to listen well and pay close attention to the regulations that were going to be presented for the temple. Ezekiel was also told to pay close attention to the exits and entrances to the inner temple court.

God also told Ezekiel to speak out to the rebellious people of Israel that God has had enough of their abominations, their admitting foreigners, those who did not follow God, into the temple to defile it. Israel had allowed the temple to be used by various religious groups, and it had become defiled and unholy. By the time Ezekiel’s temple was occupied by God, it would have been defiled by the antichrist and false prophet of the anti-christ. But Israel had a history before the time of Ezekiel in defiling the temple and not being devoted to God exclusively. Israel and Judah had been removed from the land because of those very issues. In the Millennial Temple, God will not tolerate His temple being defiled once He has occupied it again.

*Ezekiel 44:9 (ESV)*

*9 “Thus says the Lord GOD: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary.*

Very clearly, so Ezekiel does not miss the importance of it, God says: “No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary.” The temple priests will be responsible for ensuring that no foreigner or uncircumcised will be allowed to enter the temple. By modifying uncircumcised with the words heart and flesh, God indicates that it will be those who believe and follow God. Not just Jews but Gentiles as well. Believing Jews are circumcised physically and spiritually. Gentiles who believe are circumcised spiritually.

*Colossians 2:11 (ESV)*

*11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,*

*Acts 21:28 (ESV)*

*28 crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”*

Some scholars argue that verse 9 prohibits anyone who is not a believing Jew from entering the Millennial Temple. I believe that these verses would indicate otherwise.

*Ezekiel 44:10–14 (ESV)*

*10 But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment. 11 They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple and ministering in the temple. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before the people, to minister to them. 12 Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their punishment. 13 They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my holy things and the things that are most holy, but they shall bear their shame and the abominations that they have committed. 14 Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its service and all that is to be done in it.*

God would punish them because the Levites had not kept the covenant with God and had failed to protect the temple and the temple worship. They would still have a role to play, but they would have ancillary roles, not primary roles. Since they had previously failed, God said they would be restricted to slaughtering the sacrifices and burnt offerings. God says no longer will they be priests who could come near to the Holy of Holies, near to God. They will be punished for their transgressions. Not only will they be punished, but they will also bear the shame of that punishment. God will appoint them to care for the temple complex, but they will not be priests in the service of God.

*Ezekiel 44:15–16 (ESV)*

*15 “But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me. And they shall stand before me to offer me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord GOD. 16 They shall enter my sanctuary, and they shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge.*

God gives the service of the priesthood to the son of Zadok. The sons of Zadok were a limited line of priests in the Levitical priesthood. Zadok had been appointed High Priest during the reign of Solomon and was the first high priest in the first temple. He faithfully supported King Solomon and properly led Israel in following God.

*1 Kings 1:32–35 (ESV)*

*32 King David said, “Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king. 33 And the king said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. 34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ 35 You shall then come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, for he shall be king in my place. And I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.”*

*1 Kings 2:26–27 (ESV)*

*26 And to Abiathar the priest the king said, “Go to Anathoth, to your estate, for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before David my father, and because you shared in all my father’s affliction.” 27 So Solomon expelled Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, thus fulfilling the word of the LORD that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.*

Even though during this time, the people sinned, the priests, led by Zadoc, remained faithful to God. They alone will be the ones who offer sacrifices and enter the inner temple areas. We also see that the Zadokian priests will serve as mediators between God and the people and God.

*Ezekiel 44:17–18 (ESV)*

*17 When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen garments. They shall have nothing of wool on them, while they minister at the gates of the inner court, and within. 18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads, and linen undergarments around their waists. They shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat.*

The Zadokian priests will need to be properly attired to enter the inner court. They will have linen robes with no wool allowed while serving in the inner court and the inner parts of the

temple. They will also have on a turban or headdress. This is the Hebrew word פְּאֵרִי (pa-er). It has two primary uses based on grammar. In one stem, it has the idea of beauty, and in the other turban or headdress. It has the sense of being clothed with beauty. It is the same words that would be used to describe the bridal veil.

In verse 17, we see that the priests should not wear anything that would cause them to sweat.

*Genesis 3:19 (ESV)*

*19 By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”*

I researched this command by God for the Zadokian priests. I could find no corresponding requirement for the priesthood from Moses. But sweat was a sign of sin, in that it would be hard work to provide for the family. So I would argue that sweating would make the priest ceremonially unclean, so they were not allowed to sweat.

*Ezekiel 44:19 (ESV)*

*19 And when they go out into the outer court to the people, they shall put off the garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the holy chambers. And they shall put on other garments, lest they transmit holiness to the people with their garments.*

Before the priests can leave the inner court, they have to change clothes. The temple complex includes chambers, locker rooms for them to change clothes. The next statement seems to be the opposite of the way we usually think. We usually think that we defile things with our dirt. But in this case, the priests had to change clothes so that they did not transmit holiness to the people in the outer court.

This picture of holy and unholy, clean and unclean, is presented all through the Old Testament. We most often see it as the holy begin defiled by the unholy. In this temple, it works the opposite way. How cool is that?

*Ezekiel 44:20–21 (ESV)*

*20 They shall not shave their heads or let their locks grow long; they shall surely trim the hair of their heads. 21 No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court.*

The Zadokian priests would also have specific guidelines for their hair. They could not shave their heads, but they had to keep their hair trimmed. They were not allowed to have consumed any alcohol before they entered the inner court of the temple.

Shaving the head was typically seen in a time of mourning. Because these priests would be mediators between man and God, they would not be in a state of mourning. The same was true for letting hair get too long. It often occurred during the period of mourning. The priests were also prohibited from drinking wine before their service in the temple. This was to prevent them from attempting service while drunk.

*Ezekiel 44:22–23 (ESV)*

*22 They shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman, but only virgins of the offspring of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest. 23 They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.*

The priests were also prohibited from marrying a widow or divorced woman. They only could marry Jewish virgins or the widow of another priest. Again, this was to teach the separation of clean and unclean, holy and unholy. These instructions are reflective of the instructions given to the Levitical Priesthood in Leviticus.

*Ezekiel 44:24 (ESV)*

*24 In a dispute, they shall act as judges, and they shall judge it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts, and they shall keep my Sabbaths holy.*

The Zadokian priests will also serve as judges according to God's prescribed principles. They will be responsible for keeping God's plan for feasts and sacrifices. It will be the responsibility of the Zadokian Priests to ensure that Israel is compliant with the Sabbath principle and the other feasts and prescribed sacrifices as outlined in Leviticus. Israel, in its history, had often forgotten the feasts and sacrifices.

*Ezekiel 44:25–27 (ESV)*

*25 They shall not defile themselves by going near to a dead person. However, for father or mother, for son or daughter, for brother or unmarried sister they may defile themselves. 26 After he has become clean, they shall count seven days for him. 27 And on the day that he goes into the Holy Place, into the inner court, to minister in the Holy Place, he shall offer his sin offering, declares the Lord GOD.*

The priests were not defiled by coming near a dead person, other than a near relative. Then, through a cleansing practice for seven days before they can again be ceremonially clean and enter the temple's inner court. They will be required to offer a sacrifice before being clean again.

*Ezekiel 44:28–31 (ESV)*

*28 “This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance: and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession. 29 They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering, and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30 And the first of all the firstfruits of all kinds, and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests. You shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, that a blessing may rest on your house. 31 The priests shall not eat of anything, whether bird or beast, that has died of itself or is torn by wild animals.*

As an illustration to the rest of Israel, God prohibited the Zadokian Priests from owning land or inheritance in the land. God said He was their inheritance. They did not need to own land to farm since they would eat off the proceeds of the offerings and sacrifices presented in the temple. That includes everything presented in the temple as an offering or sacrifice. The first fruits of all produce were to be given to the temple priests, and the first batches of dough were given. The priests also were not to eat roadkill or anything that died in the fields. They got the best, not the rest. Through the sacrifices and offerings, God will provide for the priests.

*Ezekiel 45:1–8 (ESV)*

*45 “When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall set apart for the LORD a portion of the land as a holy district, 25,000 cubits long and 20,000 cubits broad. It shall be holy throughout its whole extent. 2 Of this a square plot of 500 by 500 cubits shall be for the sanctuary, with fifty cubits for an open space around it. 3 And from this measured district you shall measure off a section 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 broad, in which shall be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. 4 It shall be the holy portion of the land. It shall be for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and approach the LORD to minister to him, and it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary. 5 Another section, 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits broad, shall be for the Levites who minister at the temple, as their possession for cities to live in.*

*6 “Alongside the portion set apart as the holy district you shall assign for the property of the city an area 5,000 cubits broad and 25,000 cubits long. It shall belong to the whole house of Israel.*

*7 “And to the prince shall belong the land on both sides of the holy district and the property of the city, alongside the holy district and the property of the city, on the west and on the east, corresponding in length to one of the tribal portions, and extending from the western to the eastern boundary 8 of the land. It is to be*

*his property in Israel. And my princes shall no more oppress my people, but they shall let the house of Israel have the land according to their tribes.*

This section describes a central allotment of land in Israel for the priests, the Levites, and for the Prince, David. This central sacred district that Ezekiel saw was 25,000 cubits east to west, or 8.3 miles by 20,000 cubits north to south, or 6.6 miles. These verses have caused some confusion since the original Hebrew does not include the word “cubit.” Cubit does appear in verse 2, but verse 1 simply gives the numerals and not the unit of measurement. Some scholars have suggested that the measurement is the rod or reed. This would make the central sacred district more than 60 miles. It seems that the cubit is more likely since it is used in verse 2 and makes the central sacred district a more manageable size.

This central district was divided into three sections. The Northern section was for the Levites, the middle section for the temple, and open space. The southern section was reserved for the new city. The land on the sides of the district then belongs to the Prince.

*Ezekiel 45:9 (ESV)*

*9 “Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord GOD.*

Ezekiel uses the promises of the future for Israel to speak to the Jewish Leadership of his day. He reminds the princes, the Jewish Leadership, to stop taking by force the property of Israel and their taxing of the people. The Jewish leadership was supposed to care for the people of Israel and not oppress them.

*Ezekiel 45:10–12 (ESV)*

*10 “You shall have just balances, a just ephah, and a just bath. 11 The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, the bath containing one tenth of a homer, and the ephah one tenth of a homer; the homer shall be the standard measure. 12 The shekel shall be twenty gerahs; twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels shall be your mina.*

In order to properly care for the people, all the tools of corruption need to be removed, and honest and accurate systems must be in place. It was a real problem in Israel was the use of inaccurate weights for their balance scales. Shop keepers would use light weights to sell as an ephah, something smaller than an ephah, and increase their profits. Ezekiel here tells them they need to stop doing that. Ezekiel also prescribed the weights and sizes to be used.

## Temple Offerings 45:13-46:24

*Ezekiel 45:13–17 (ESV)*

*13 “This is the offering that you shall make: one sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat, and one sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley, 14 and*

*as the fixed portion of oil, measured in baths, one tenth of a bath from each cor (the cor, like the homer, contains ten baths). 15 And one sheep from every flock of two hundred, from the watering places of Israel for grain offering, burnt offering, and peace offerings, to make atonement for them, declares the Lord GOD. 16 All the people of the land shall be obliged to give this offering to the prince in Israel. 17 It shall be the prince's duty to furnish the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the new moons, and the Sabbaths, all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel: he shall provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement on behalf of the house of Israel.*

Ezekiel had just reprimanded the current Jewish Leadership for their fraudulent practices to become wealthy themselves now reminds them that during the Millennial reign of the Messiah, just and honest weights will be used. Those weights will be used to measure out offerings and gifts to God. Ezekiel then describes the future sacrificial system.

Ezekiel describes the sacrifices as being proportional to the wealth or lack of wealth of the people they are to give 1/60<sup>th</sup> their wheat and barley, 1% of their olive oil, and one sheep from every 200 sheep of their flock. This tax will then become used by the Prince in Israel. These will be used to provide for the people and continue the sacrifices in the temple.

A full and complete sacrificial system will be established in the Millennial kingdom, as we saw in chapter 40. This has caused many in the church frustration. This frustration is based upon the modern church's misunderstanding of the Sacrificial system and what it did. People were not saved through their sacrifices. They were saved through faith in God, just as we are today. Since eternal life was not the by-product of the sacrifices, continuing the sacrifices after Jesus' death, burial and resurrection is not blasphemous. In the Millennium, the sacrifices will be a form of worship of God, and the Grace He has given.

*Ezekiel 45:18–20 (ESV)*

*18 "Thus says the Lord GOD: In the first month, on the first day of the month, you shall take a bull from the herd without blemish, and purify the sanctuary. 19 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court. 20 You shall do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who has sinned through error or ignorance; so you shall make atonement for the temple.*

During the Millennium, there will be a cycle of feasts, beginning on New Years. On New Year's, there would be a rite of purification. The Prince will offer a bull as a sin offering and place blood from the bull on the doorposts of the temple, the four corners of the altar, and the gates of the inner court. This same procedure is repeated then seven days later.

*Ezekiel 45:21–25 (ESV)*

*21 “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall celebrate the Feast of the Passover, and for seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22 On that day the prince shall provide for himself and all the people of the land a young bull for a sin offering. 23 And on the seven days of the festival he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD seven young bulls and seven rams without blemish, on each of the seven days; and a male goat daily for a sin offering. 24 And he shall provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull, an ephah for each ram, and a hin of oil to each ephah. 25 In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month and for the seven days of the feast, he shall make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, and grain offerings, and for the oil.*

A week later, the feast of Passover is celebrated. During this week, no leaven is to be consumed. The prince will then provide a bull for himself and all the people as a sin offering. Again this does not remove the sin but is a form of worship. A burnt offering will also be offered every day of the seven days of unleavened bread. Then on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, they will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days.

Some scholars ask the question of why Ezekiel only specified these feasts and not all the rest that had been on Israel’s calendar. Scholars are divided on this issue. Some say that Ezekiel used the figure of speech, known as a “merism.” The first two in a long list and the last item indicate that the entire list is used in a merism. So by naming the first two feasts of the year and the last feast of the year, Ezekiel was implying the entire calendar of feasts, all six. Others argue that only three were necessary since God entered into a new covenant with Israel; two feasts reflect Israel’s national cleansing, and one feast reflects Israel’s new position in the Millennial kingdom. Either case is justifiable.

*Ezekiel 46:1 (ESV)*

*46 “Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened.*

God continues to give Ezekiel direction concerning worship during the millennial kingdom. The Lord tells Ezekiel that the inner court gate that faces east was to be shut during the week and only open on the sabbath. Also, on the day of the New Moon, the gate should be opened.

*Ezekiel 46:2–3 (ESV)*

*2 The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. 3 The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the new moons.*

The Prince (David) will be allowed to stand in the gate while the sacrifices he presented are offered on the altar. David was to bring a sacrifice on behalf of the people. (44:3) David also provides sacrifices for the people on Sabbaths, New Moon days, and other major feast days.

At the end of the day, the gate will again be closed. David is not a priest, so he does not participate in the actual sacrifice or enter the inner court. Standing in the gate while the sacrifices are offered seems to indicate that David is in a mediatorial role, serving between the priests of the inner court and the people of the inner court.

*Ezekiel 46:4–8 (ESV)*

*4 The burnt offering that the prince offers to the LORD on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish. 5 And the grain offering with the ram shall be an ephah, and the grain offering with the lambs shall be as much as he is able, together with a hin of oil to each ephah. 6 On the day of the new moon he shall offer a bull from the herd without blemish, and six lambs and a ram, which shall be without blemish. 7 As a grain offering he shall provide an ephah with the bull and an ephah with the ram, and with the lambs as much as he is able, together with a hin of oil to each ephah. 8 When the prince enters, he shall enter by the vestibule of the gate, and he shall go out by the same way.*

David will bring for sacrifice six lambs without blemish, a ram without blemish. He will also bring a grain offering of an ephah of grain with the ram and as much as he can with the lambs, along with a hin of oil. On the New Moon day, David will offer a bull from the herd without blemish, along with six lambs, a ram, all without blemish, along with a hin of oil for each ephah of grain.

Many Christians today balk at the idea that the sacrificial system will be established after the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Many have been taught that Jesus' death on the cross had abrogated the sacrificial system in the church age. This stems from a poor understanding of what the sacrificial system in Israel was all about. Many understand that the people of Israel were saved through their sacrifices. The reality is that the sacrificial system did not convey grace to the people of Israel. They relied on faith just as we do today. Salvation has always been faith and not the sacrifice of animals. A proper understanding of this makes it easier to see that the millennial sacrificial system is worship and not salvific. The millennial sacrificial system is all about worship and a celebration of the redemptive work of Jesus.

*Ezekiel 46:9–10 (ESV)*

*9 “When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, he who enters by the north gate to worship shall go out by the south gate, and he who enters by the south gate shall go out by the north gate: no one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered, but each shall go out straight ahead. 10 When they enter, the prince shall enter with them, and when they go out, he shall go out.*

I find this verse fascinating. Those who come to worship are to leave in different ways from how they came in. Clearly, this was to keep the order of the procession as there would be a large number of people. I believe that there is also an analogy here. I think the picture here is of being changed by worship. When we come before the Lord in true worship, it should change us. It appears that this rule was intended to keep order in the temple worship process and illustrate how our worship of God should change us. We also see here that David was to go in and out with the people.

*Ezekiel 46:11 (ESV)*

*11 “At the feasts and the appointed festivals, the grain offering with a young bull shall be an ephah, and with a ram an ephah, and with the lambs as much as one is able to give, together with a hin of oil to an ephah.*

God states that on the feasts and special festivals, David gives an ephah of grain with a young bull, the ram, and the lambs as much as he can, along with a hin of oil for each ephah. As I looked at this passage, I could not detect why God reiterated these instructions.

*Ezekiel 46:12 (ESV)*

*12 When the prince provides a freewill offering, either a burnt offering or peace offerings as a freewill offering to the LORD, the gate facing east shall be opened for him. And he shall offer his burnt offering or his peace offerings as he does on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out the gate shall be shut.*

God also tells Ezekiel that should David want to make a freewill offering or an offering that is not a prescribed sacrifice, the east gate should be opened for him. This should take place just like it was on the sabbath, except he should exit via the east gate as well. In the other times, then enter in one gate and then go out another gate.

*Ezekiel 46:13–15 (ESV)*

*13 “You shall provide a lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning you shall provide it. 14 And you shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning, one sixth of an ephah, and one third of a hin of oil to moisten the flour, as a grain offering to the LORD. This is a perpetual statute. 15 Thus the lamb and the meal offering and the oil shall be provided, morning by morning, for a regular burnt offering.*

Ezekiel here mentions the morning sacrifices but not the evening sacrifices seen in the book of Exodus. (Ex 29:38-41) Some scholars argue that Ezekiel assumed that the readers would know to use the same worship practices for the evening sacrifices, and he did not need to include them. Other scholars argue that there will only be morning sacrifices in the millennial kingdom and not evening sacrifices. I don't think there is enough data in the text to inform us one way or another.

*Ezekiel 46:16–18 (ESV)*

*16 “Thus says the Lord GOD: If the prince makes a gift to any of his sons as his inheritance, it shall belong to his sons. It is their property by inheritance. 17 But if he makes a gift out of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of liberty. Then it shall revert to the prince; surely it is his inheritance—it shall belong to his sons. 18 The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their property. He shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of my people shall be scattered from his property.”*

As I studied this passage, I admit I found it really clear, but I still could not understand it. First, let me say that this passage, I believe, gives us essential information to make the identity of the “Prince” certain as to who it is not. Verse 16 speaks of the Prince's sons who would eliminate the Prince from being a euphemism for Jesus, the messiah. Our previous finding is that the prince is actually King David.

King David, who died almost 3,000 years ago, governs Israel during the millennium. Of course, this means that he has been resurrected and provided a new glorified body as the church received. How we interpret “his sons” is another question. It could be that sons here relate to his physical sons, such as Solomon. That would be the most logical, literal way of interpreting what is being said. Sons could also be a reference to those he is leading, meaning Israel. I believe that this is a strained way of viewing the text.

The primary meaning or importance of this text, I believe, is to illustrate that during the Millennium, those rulings will be fair and equitable and not like the leadership Ezekiel was familiar with, in his lifetime. The character of Israel's millennial leaders will be more like God's than Israel's previous leaders.

We also see in this passage a reestablishment of the year of Jubilee, or as it will be called in the millennium, The year of liberty. The year of Jubilee was a command by God that on the 50<sup>th</sup> year, the property was to be returned to the original family, slaves freed, debts canceled, and the land to be allowed to rest and lay fallow. (Lev 25:8-55) This system was intended to ensure that no one remained a slave forever, remained poor forever, or was able to gain too much property or wealth. The theological implications of the year of Jubilee are two-fold. First, God owns the land, not the people. God gives the people use of it, but in returning to the original owners, it is revealed that God actually holds the title. The release of slaves also illustrated that God's chosen people were to be free. Slavery was permitted, but only for a period of time. God's chosen people were to be free.

*Ezekiel 46:19–20 (ESV)*

*19 Then he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, to the north row of the holy chambers for the priests, and behold, a place was there at the extreme western end of them. 20 And he said to me, “This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, in order not to bring them out into the outer court and so transmit holiness to the people.”*

Ezekiel’s angelic guide brought Ezekiel through the entrance to what is sometimes called the “priest’s building.” We were introduced to this area inside the inner court in Ezekiel 42:1-14. It is in these rooms that the priests cook the animal sacrifices to avoid contact with the people. (vv. 21-24) In the four corners of the outer court were also kitchens where food for the people was prepared. One commentator stated that the millennial temple would be a healthy fusion of spiritual worship and social interaction.<sup>36</sup>

Look closely at verse 20. The priests prepared the food in these inner court kitchens to prevent them from transmitting holiness to the people—what a fascinating statement. We usually think of the separation of clean and unclean in the other direction, the clean being soiled by the unclean. But in this case, it is clean that will impact the unclean. We have seen this previously in Ezekiel.

*Ezekiel 44:19 (ESV)*

*19 And when they go out into the outer court to the people, they shall put off the garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the holy chambers. And they shall put on other garments, lest they transmit holiness to the people with their garments.*

*Ezekiel 46:21–24 (ESV)*

*21 Then he brought me out to the outer court and led me around to the four corners of the court. And behold, in each corner of the court there was another court— 22 in the four corners of the court were small courts, forty cubits long and thirty broad; the four were of the same size. 23 On the inside, around each of the four courts was a row of masonry, with hearths made at the bottom of the rows all around. 24 Then he said to me, “These are the kitchens where those who minister at the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people.”*

Ezekiel is then shown the outer court kitchens where the priests will cook food for the people. Out in the outer court, the separation of clean and unclean is not present, and the people are not infected by holiness. The millennial temple will be a place of fellowship as well as worship. It appears that the temple will be the center of activity for Israel in the millennium.

## And Dwelt Among Us 47:1-48:35

As we move into chapter 47, Ezekiel continues his presentation of the millennium. In the early parts of chapter 47, Ezekiel presents the Messiah’s blessing of His people.

## Life-Giving River 47:1-12

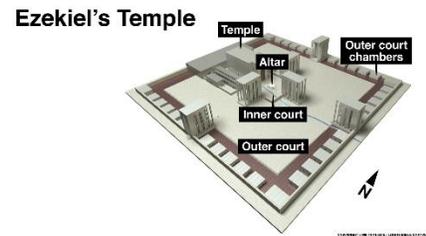
*Ezekiel 47:1–2 (ESV)*

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<sup>36</sup> Cooper, Lamar Eugene. *Ezekiel*. Vol. 17. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

*47 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and behold, the water was trickling out on the south side.*

Ezekiel is brought back to the door of the temple by his angel guide. At the temple door, Ezekiel saw the water flowing below the door's threshold toward the east. The water flowed from the temple to the east from the south side of the threshold, south of the altar. Ezekiel is then taken through the north gate and is led around to the east side, where he sees the water coming out of the temple complex.



*Ezekiel 47:3–6 (ESV)*

*3 Going on eastward with a measuring line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water, and it was ankle-deep. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was waist-deep. 5 Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen. It was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. 6 And he said to me, “Son of man, have you seen this?”*

*Then he led me back to the bank of the river.*

Following the water flow for 1750 feet (1000 cubits), the water was ankle-deep. By going another 1750 feet, the depth was now knee-deep. Then by going another 1750 feet, the water was waist-deep. The angel guide took Ezekiel another 1750 feet where the water was over his head. It was deep enough to swim in, and he could not pass through it. The angel guide then asked Ezekiel if he had seen this.

As I worked through this passage, I came to this question, and at first, I did not know what to do with it. But then it came to me that perhaps the angel guide was setting Ezekiel up to see something even greater. Ezekiel had just followed a river coming from the temple threshold in the millennial temple but was being prepared to see something even greater.

*Ezekiel 47:6–12 (ESV)*

*6 And he said to me, “Son of man, have you seen this?”*

*Then he led me back to the bank of the river. 7 As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 And he said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become*

*fresh. 9 And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. 10 Fishermen will stand beside the sea. From Engedi to Eneclaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets. Its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. 11 But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. 12 And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”*

The angel guide then took Ezekiel back to the river bank. Ezekiel then saw on the bank of the river trees on both sides of the river. The guide explained that the river made its way down to the dead sea. When this river gets to the dead sea, it will make the sea freshwater. The angel explained that everywhere the river went, things would grow and live. The river brings life. The dead sea would become alive and would be populated by fish.

I get the impression as I read verses 1-12 that Ezekiel was privileged to observe the first flow of the river from the temple to the dead sea. When he had been shown the river, he was asked if he saw this. Perhaps, Ezekiel was asked if he had seen this because there were no trees at first, but when they went back, there were trees. Then when we add verse 8. Look closely at the verse.

*Ezekiel 47:8 (ESV)*

*8 And he said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh.*

When the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. That is a strange way to frame this if it was already functioning this way. I think it is possible that Ezekiel had the privilege to see the rebirth of the environment through the life-giving water flowing from the temple. From the trees and forest growth to the dead sea, the lowest place on the earth at more than 1400 feet below sea level, turning from very salty to fresh, teeming with fish and plant life. At more than 1400 feet below sea level, the lowest place on earth, there is no place for water to flow. Even though water flows into the dead sea all year long, along with all the minerals and salt, it does not flow out. It only evaporates, leaving the minerals and salts behind. Over the last 8,000 to 10,000 years, this body of water has had the highest salinity on the planet. The dead sea currently has a salinity of 34.2%, 9.6 times saltier than the oceans. But when the water flows from the temple through the land to the dead sea, the dead sea becomes alive and full of life.

I think God presents this to Ezekiel to remind us that life only comes from Him, even in the most unlikely places and times. God restores the ravaged nation of Israel through supernatural means. What a beautiful picture.

## Land Allotments 47:13-48:29

*Ezekiel 47:13–14 (ESV)*

*13 Thus says the Lord GOD: “This is the boundary by which you shall divide the land for inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions. 14 And you shall divide equally what I swore to give to your fathers. This land shall fall to you as your inheritance.*

God then gives Ezekiel the land areas of the tribes in the millennial kingdom. The Levites had already been given their allotment in chapter 45, which will be revisited in chapter 48. We also see that Joseph will be given two portions. This is because there is no tribe of Joseph. Ephraim and Manasseh. No tribe of Levi in this distribution plus two tribes from Joseph results in 12 tribes. Notice also that God says there will be equal shares of the Promised Land. In the Abrahamic covenant, God swore to give to Abraham's descendants an area from the Euphrates to Egypt. Israel never occupied it all. But they will now!

*Ezekiel 47:15–17 (ESV)*

*15 “This shall be the boundary of the land: On the north side, from the Great Sea by way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, and on to Zedad, 16 Berothah, Sibraim (which lies on the border between Damascus and Hamath), as far as Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran. 17 So the boundary shall run from the sea to Hazar-enan, which is on the northern border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north. This shall be the north side.*

The northern boundary extends from the Mediterranean Sea, the Great Sea, to a border north of Damascus, then on to a not specifically known place, Hamath. It is believed that Hamath is northeast of Damascus. Then on to Hazer-hatticon on the border of Hauran. Hauran may be the Israelite region of east of the Jordan River, north of Gilead.

*Ezekiel 47:18 (ESV)*

*18 “On the east side, the boundary shall run between Hauran and Damascus; along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel; to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar. This shall be the east side.*

The eastern border between Hauran and Damascus, then along the Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea. The location of Tamar is not known. Many believe that Tamar is south of the Dead Sea.

*Ezekiel 47:19–20 (ESV)*

*19 “On the south side, it shall run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribah-kadesh, from there along the Brook of Egypt to the Great Sea. This shall be the south side.*

20 *“On the west side, the Great Sea shall be the boundary to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This shall be the west side.*

From Tamar, location unknown, west as far as the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, and then along the Brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean. Some have attempted to make the Brook of Egypt is the Nile River. But that is not possible, and most scholars agree that the Brook of Egypt is actually the Wadi el-Arish. In the original Hebrew, the words “of Egypt” are not found. They are supplied in most English translations to make it clearer.

The western border is the Medertarian Sea, a natural boundary.

*Ezekiel 47:21–23 (ESV)*

21 *“So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. 22 You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the sojourners who reside among you and have had children among you. They shall be to you as native-born children of Israel. With you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. 23 In whatever tribe the sojourner resides, there you shall assign him his inheritance, declares the Lord GOD.*

In chapter 48, we will be given the boundaries for each of the tribes. The second half of chapter 47 presents the national boundaries. We also see here that there will be allotments for those who are not from Israel but find themselves in Israel, especially with Children. They shall be considered like those from Israel.

The millennium will be a time of blessing for the people of Israel. Gentiles will also be able to participate in that blessing.

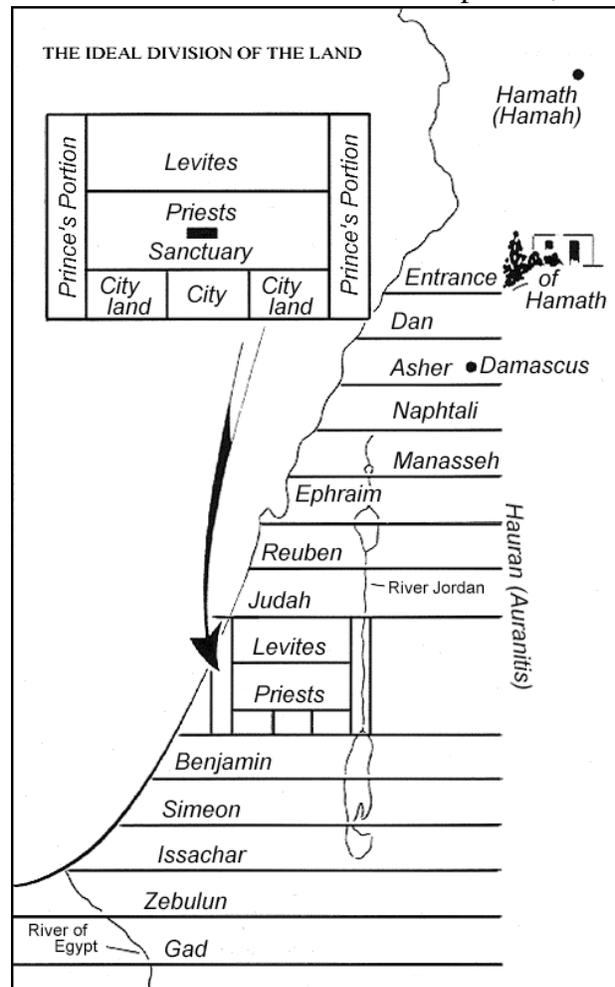
*Ezekiel 48:1–7 (ESV)*

*“These are the names of the tribes: Beginning at the northern extreme, beside the way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enan (which is on the northern border of Damascus over against Hamath), and extending from the east side to the west, Dan, one portion. 2 Adjoining the territory of Dan, from the east side to the west, Asher, one portion. 3 Adjoining the territory of Asher, from the east side to the west, Naphtali, one portion. 4 Adjoining the territory of Naphtali, from the east side to the west, Manasseh, one portion. 5 Adjoining the territory of Manasseh, from the east side to the west, Ephraim, one portion. 6 Adjoining the territory of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, Reuben, one*

*portion. 7 Adjoining the territory of Reuben, from the east side to the west, Judah, one portion.*

In chapter 47, we saw the general boundaries of the nation of Israel. Now here in chapter 48, we begin to see the boundaries of the individual tribes. Here in chapter 48, we are provided the allotments for the tribes. Verse 1-7 provides the allotments for the tribes north of the sacred zone. These tribes are Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah. These tribal allotments do not follow any other allotment pattern found in the Old Testament. The allotments are of equal size, but that size is not known. We are not provided sufficient data to determine the size of each allotment. The Rabbis taught that the north-south distance for each tribe was 25,000 cubits (48:8), which is about 7.1 miles. This seems to be too short of a distance. If the royal cubit is used, then the distance would be 8.286 miles

Dan was at one point very heavily involved in idolatry, so it makes sense that Dan would be the furthest away from the worship center. The three northernmost tribal allotments were named for three sons of concubines. Some scholars suggest that this is why they are the most removed from the temple worship center. In contrast to that, the tribe of Judah, from which the Messiah comes, occupies the area on the border of the sacred zone.



*Ezekiel 48:8–22 (ESV)*

8 *“Adjoining the territory of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the portion which you shall set apart, 25,000 cubits in breadth, and in length equal to one of the tribal portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the midst of it. 9 The portion that you shall set apart for the LORD shall be 25,000 cubits in length, and 20,000 in breadth. 10 These shall be the allotments of the holy portion: the priests shall have an allotment measuring 25,000 cubits on the northern side, 10,000 cubits in breadth on the western side, 10,000 in breadth on the eastern side, and 25,000 in length on the southern side, with the sanctuary of the LORD in the midst of it. 11 This shall be for the consecrated priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept my charge, who did not go astray when the people of Israel went astray, as the Levites did. 12 And it shall belong to them*

*as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites. 13 And alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites shall have an allotment 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in breadth. The whole length shall be 25,000 cubits and the breadth 20,000. 14 They shall not sell or exchange any of it. They shall not alienate this choice portion of the land, for it is holy to the LORD.*

*15 “The remainder, 5,000 cubits in breadth and 25,000 in length, shall be for common use for the city, for dwellings and for open country. In the midst of it shall be the city, 16 and these shall be its measurements: the north side 4,500 cubits, the south side 4,500, the east side 4,500, and the west side 4,500. 17 And the city shall have open land: on the north 250 cubits, on the south 250, on the east 250, and on the west 250. 18 The remainder of the length alongside the holy portion shall be 10,000 cubits to the east, and 10,000 to the west, and it shall be alongside the holy portion. Its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. 19 And the workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall till it. 20 The whole portion that you shall set apart shall be 25,000 cubits square, that is, the holy portion together with the property of the city.*

*21 “What remains on both sides of the holy portion and of the property of the city shall belong to the prince. Extending from the 25,000 cubits of the holy portion to the east border, and westward from the 25,000 cubits to the west border, parallel to the tribal portions, it shall belong to the prince. The holy portion with the sanctuary of the temple shall be in its midst. 22 It shall be separate from the property of the Levites and the property of the city, which are in the midst of that which belongs to the prince. The portion of the prince shall lie between the territory of Judah and the territory of Benjamin.*

In the geographical center of Israel is the sacred zone, previously described in chapter 45. This land will be reserved for the prince, the Zadokite priests, the Levites, and their families. The sacred zone will be divided into four areas. In verses 9-12, we see the allotment for the caring priests and the temple. Verse 13-14 reflects the allotment for the Levites. Verses 15-20 is the allotment for the city. Then in verses 21-22, is the allotment for the prince.

This sacred zone is 25,000 cubits north to south. It is the same distance east to west as the tribal allotments. There is also a 25,000 by 10,000 zone in the center that is further sub-divided into three zones. In verse 9, we see the area that this area is set apart for the Lord. In this zone, the Zadokite priests will live as a reward for their faithfulness to the Lord. These priests will have the responsibility to care for the temple and the overall administration of the land. The Levites will have the zone directly north of the zone for the Zadokite priests. This land shall not be sold or transferred.

This central district sacred zone will be called “Holy to the Lord.” located at the center geographically of the nation and functionally. All life will revolve around this central sacred zone. This reality perfectly illustrates the centrality of worship in the life of a believer.

To the south of the Zadokite Priest's allotment is an area allocated to the city itself. (15)The city will occupy an area of 4,500 X 4,500 cubits, with a 250 cubit buffer of pastureland. This will be the place that God abides with people.

*Ezekiel 48:23–29 (ESV)*

*23 “As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west, Benjamin, one portion. 24 Adjoining the territory of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon, one portion. 25 Adjoining the territory of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar, one portion. 26 Adjoining the territory of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun, one portion. 27 Adjoining the territory of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad, one portion. 28 And adjoining the territory of Gad to the south, the boundary shall run from Tamar to the waters of Meribah-kadesh, from there along the Brook of Egypt to the Great Sea. 29 This is the land that you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions, declares the Lord GOD.*

South of the Sacred zone are the allotments for the tribes Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad. Benjamin will be the closest tribe, to the south, of the sacred zone. It is unknown why Benjamin received this honor. Some scholars believe that the reason is that Benjamin gave comfort to his father when Joseph was sold into slavery. Benjamin also was the tribe of the first king in Israel.

### The Lord's Presence 48:30-35

These final verses in the book focus on the city in the middle of the sacred zone. Some scholars make a big deal out of God's place of abode with the people will be a city since cities have such a history of being places of sin and unrighteous activity.

*Ezekiel 48:30–35 (ESV)*

*30 “These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be 4,500 cubits by measure, 31 three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel. 32 On the east side, which is to be 4,500 cubits, three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan. 33 On the south side, which is to be 4,500 cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. 34 On the west side, which is to be 4,500 cubits, three gates, the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. 35 The circumference of the city shall be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There.”*

The city will have 12 gates, three on each side. These gates will be named for the 12 tribes of Israel. The city will be named :הַיְהוָה שָׁמָּה ( yhw h šmh ) Yahweh Shamah. “The Lord is there.” Back in Ezekiel 10, Ezekiel recorded the departure of God from the temple. In chapter 43,

Ezekiel recorded the return of God to the temple. The name reflects that God will be with His people, in a place that God specifically creates to be with His people.

## Conclusion

As the book of Ezekiel concludes, we are presented with the eschatological future. Ezekiel does not differentiate between the millennium and the New Heaven and New Earth's eternal state. He is not presented with the information to know the difference. We have the benefit of having other eschatological Biblical Books to provide us additional information.

What we see in these last chapters of the book of Ezekiel reflects the entire book. God has a plan that provides for and protects His people. God's plan from before creation includes the final judgment by Jesus and His millennial reign. God has a temple in heaven that the temples on earth have been modeled after. God presented to His people the system of worship that includes sacrifices and offerings. Jesus then came to earth as a man and sacrificed His perfect life to provide God the Father with the ability to give us grace and not execute us for our sins. Jesus will return to rule over Israel, who will have been prepared for His reign through the Tribulation. Jesus will rule for 1,000 years while the temple worship system is resumed. These sacrifices will not be for atonement but worship and remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus.

The book of Ezekiel fills in some gaps for us in our eschatological understanding. It also creates some issues for us in putting the pieces together. What is clear is that God will return to live with His people.